



Meeting the Standards Needs of the CIS Region

ASTM's growing relationships with the emerging economies of the CIS region yield benefits for regional businesses looking to conform to international standards.

By Maryann Gorman

Almost from the day the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, several former Soviet republics have worked together to fashion an institutional framework that fosters economic cooperation and integration. In 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union was formally established. Currently comprising five member states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia), the EEU has united 183 million people and a total gross domestic product of over 4 trillion USD into one market.

In any emerging region, the use and adoption of internationally recognized standards is key to gaining regulatory compliance and market access and to realizing a host of other business benefits. For the past decade, ASTM staff have worked with government agencies and businesses in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region to make it easier for them to use ASTM standards.



GOING WHERE THE CUSTOMERS ARE

Although it is no longer politically connected to the CIS region, Russia is still the major driver of the region's economy. As a result, Russian business organizations have been a key focus of ASTM's efforts to share information on the potential benefits of using international standards such as ASTM's.

One such organization is RSPP, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. Founded in 1991, the RSPP promotes the interests of business in Russia and has a membership roster that includes both private and state-owned companies. Its Committee on Technical Regulation, Standardization and Conformity Assessment has been instrumental in helping ASTM coordinate local activities in Russia and establish a strong working relationship with the Eurasian Standards Council, or EASC, a regional consortium of national standards development bodies representing 12 countries, including all members of the Commonwealth of Independent States

With the aid of RSPP, John Pace, ASTM's vice president of publications and marketing, and James S. Thomas, ASTM's assistant vice president of sales and marketing, have visited Russia and CIS region countries numerous times in the past decade to further relationships there. These visits have helped businesses and government entities in the region access, use and incorporate ASTM standards. As an example, hundreds of ASTM standards are now used as the basis of national standards in the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Moldova (all signatories in ASTM's Memorandum of Understanding Program, which has been instrumental in enabling fruitful relationships').

During these visits, Pace and Thomas have conducted dozens of seminars with partners such as RSPP; document distributors Normdocs and Kodeks; and Rosstandart, the Russian federal agency on technical regulation and

metrology. These events have introduced ASTM's standards, process and services to hundreds of engineers, scientists and government officials in the region.

LEARNING BY DOING

Despite extensive meetings and a number of successes (such as a thriving region-specific ASTM Proficiency Testing Program run in partnership with the Russian Coordinating Informational Service, known as the CIS Center), ASTM felt the bigger picture somehow wasn't being addressed. Countries in this region are working to make local industries more competitive in an ever-evolving global marketplace and are investing their resources to effectively capitalize on their status as emerging markets.

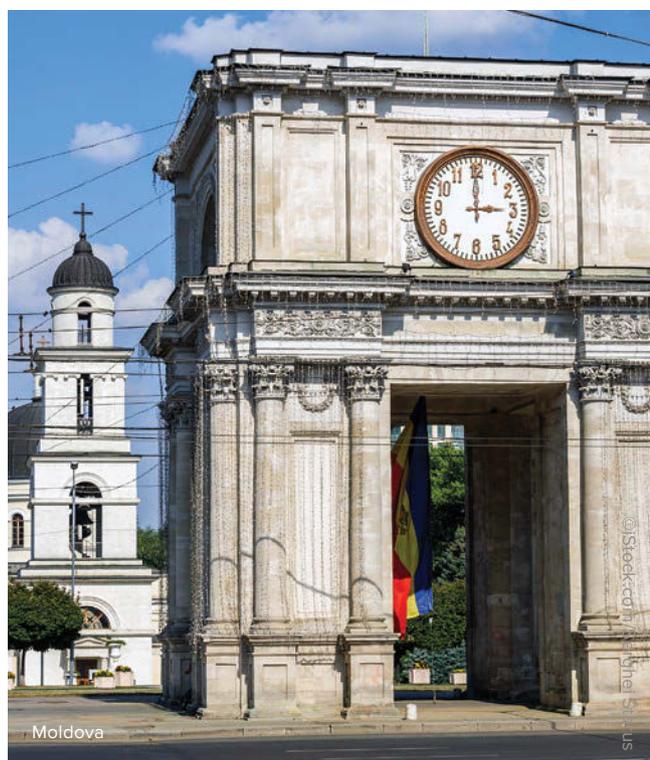
So, leaders at ASTM asked: "What can we do to ensure the people who have been and are using our standards have the access they need?"

Thomas says, "In the engineering world, a significant change is being felt; a large and influential generation is retiring, taking with them irreplaceable institutional knowledge about how and why using international standards is so important to their daily work flow. This really highlighted the need to reach people unfamiliar with ASTM."

In addition, Thomas realized that today's information technology would make it easier than before to overcome language barriers. "While hands-on education in this region is vital, we also need a way for customers and members to learn about and navigate our services on their own," he says, "During our travel to the region, I've heard countless times, 'We would use ASTM standards more if your products and services were available in our local language.'"



Kazakhstan



Moldova

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR THE REGION

They asked; ASTM has delivered. Taking into account years of feedback, ASTM is delivering many of its products and services in Russian to support the needs of the CIS region.

Pace, Thomas and a team of ASTM staff members have spent the last few years developing a suite of products and services and partnerships — many of them in Russian — geared toward helping CIS region businesses, government agencies and others in their quest for market access through the use of ASTM standards. Some examples:

- Website search capabilities in Russian, available within the Compass® platform, that return results for thousands of standards (from ASTM, UOP (petroleum), and the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials) as well as technical papers, books and journals;
- 2,500 ASTM standards translated into Russian, on subjects such as petroleum, metals, construction and the environment;
- A regional Proficiency Testing Program that allows Russian Federation laboratories to compare their performance to more than 190 other participating labs;
- Customized training courses that can be brought on site, such as recent courses held in St. Petersburg, Russia, on statistics and corrosion standards;
- Online training courses available in Russian on oil and gas standards, in addition to many other English-language courses on construction, the environment, metals and oxygen safety;
- Consulting services that provide direct access to subject matter experts; and

- Cooperation with the Eurasian Standards Council on a regional agreement that would allow use of ASTM standards as the basis of EASC regionally adopted standards.

Thomas is confident that making these and other services conveniently available will help support the 2015 enactment of a new federal standardization law for the Russian Federation, No. 162-FZ. “As an international standards developer, we believe providing regional markets with standards, products and services in their language goes a long way to supporting this law,” he says.

MICROSITE

A highly anticipated Russian-language microsite (www.astm.org/ru) will soon be launched to provide this user community with information about all of these products, services and opportunities.

Users accessing www.astm.org from the CIS region will automatically be redirected to the microsite, where they can quickly find specific information about the ASTM products and services available to them in Russian.

“While there’s still more to be done, we’ve taken a big step in helping this region better utilize our products and services,” says Thomas.

Note

1. ASTM’s Memorandum of Understanding Program, in which MOUs are signed between ASTM and national and regional standards bodies in developing areas, launched in 2001. Its goal is to encourage the participation of technical experts from around the world in the ASTM standards development process and broaden the global acceptance and use of ASTM International standards.

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