

The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) is proud to announce the first South African Economic Regulators Conference to be held in Pretoria on the **21 & 22 August 2012**. NERSA has appointed Trade and Industry Policy Strategies (TIPS) as its Conference organizer. NERSA and TIPS hereby invite interested academics, staff from regulatory bodies and licensees to submit abstracts of papers to be presented at this conference.

BACKGROUND

Like many other developing countries, the South African Government economic policy is spearheaded by an infrastructure thrust, to be implemented mainly - but not only - by state owned enterprises. The mixed regulatory dispensation and the various economic regulators' decisions play a critical role in shaping the trajectory of South Africa's infrastructure sectors, including energy, transport, water and telecommunications.

At the same time, the limited financing capabilities of state owned enterprises and the state on the one hand and a stop-start approach to the introduction of competition and privatisation in the infrastructure sector on the other, make for a challenging environment for economic regulators. In some instances this may lead to a tension between the ideal of a "developmental state" and the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the economy.

A general concern is the fact that administered prices have been a major contributor to inflation and the rising cost of living. Prominent recent examples include an effective doubling of the electricity price over three years and a public outcry over toll road fees. The developmental implications of administered prices and tariffs are especially significant in light of the fact that these costs impact the poor disproportionately as a portion of their overall income leading to sometimes complex and inconsistent subsidies and cross subsidies.

It is recognized that the efficacy of economic regulators depends in part on their perceived independence, funding, governance and how they interface with policy, planning and the public as a whole.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

- To establish and advance an intellectual discourse in economic regulation in South Africa;
- To share knowledge and best practice among economic regulators in South Africa with the possible participation of invited international economic regulators;
- To generate cross-fertilization of ideas among economic regulators, intellectuals, academics and others working in the area of economic regulation;
- To attract interest among students, academics, practitioners in economic regulators and the like to the area of economic regulation
- To provide an environment for dialogue between practitioners in economic regulation, researchers, policy-makers and other stakeholders around economic regulation issues.

CONFERENCE THEME AND SUB-THEMES

The proposed conference seeks to address the following key question: ***"How can South Africa's economic regulators contribute to cost-effective delivery of essential infrastructure in the face of key financial, social and environmental imperatives?"***

The sub-themes in this discussion include:

- The policy-planning-regulation interface
- Sources and modes of funding for future infrastructure, State owned enterprises, public-private partnerships, privately owned entities
- Tariffs and pricing: reasonable returns and their economic, social and environmental sustainability
- Regulating for competition and security of supply in the context of funding challenges
- Institutions, governance and coordination (including reporting, funding and appeal)
- Industry restructuring or unbundling of vertically integrated industries
- Entry barriers for new operators

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Abstracts can be submitted to the organizers at ipeleng@tips.org.za.

Abstract Guidelines:

- A brief summary of not more than one page long, highlighting the key research question and broadly describing the research methodology and expected results.
- Titles are required — they should be brief and clearly state the topic.
- The topic should be in line with the Conference theme and sub themes given above..

TIPS can also be contacted directly should you require any additional information.

The closing date for the submission of abstracts is **31 March 2012**.

Authors of selected abstracts will be contacted by 13 April 2012 with a request to submit a full paper (including guidelines on format and style).

The deadline for the submission of full papers is 29 June 2012.