



United Nations

UNECE Weekly

Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 303 — 19-23 January 2009

Joint Conference on the Impact of Globalization on Transport, Logistics and Trade: the UNECE work

24 February, Conference room XII, 3 p.m.

This event will be a unique opportunity to identify synergies and areas of collaboration between the trade and transport communities, in particular on such issues as supply chain competitiveness and measuring border crossing performances.

It will show how UNECE trade and transport facilitation conventions, standards and policy recommendations can provide substantive benefits to both Governments and business within the global trading environment.

A brief background paper will elaborate on UNECE's role in improving transport, simplifying processes, lowering the cost of doing business and increasing predictability and transparency. It will identify possible ways to help countries increase their economic efficiency and their participation in global supply chains through UNECE's trade and transport facilitation instruments and activities.

Joint Trade and Transport Conference on the Impact of Globalization on Transport, Logistics and Trade: The UNECE work



The Conference will take place during the annual sessions of the Committee on Inland Transport and the Committee on Trade. Participants will include key government officials from all over the region; high-ranking representatives from international organizations, the European Union and the International Transport Forum; experienced scholars and experts from non-governmental organizations and trade and transport associations; as well as international business executives from the trade and logistics sector.

For more information see <http://www.unece.org/jointconference2009.htm> or contact focal points: Martine-Sophie Fouvez (infotransport@unece.org) for the Transport Division, and Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab and Mika Vepsalainen for the Trade Division (ctrade@unece.org).

A Decade of Promoting Environmental Democracy



©www.photostock.am fotolia

The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted on 25 June 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark, at the Fourth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe". It remains the UNECE region's main effort and the only legally-binding instrument so far to implement principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

With 42 Parties to the Convention (41 member States and the European Community), the standards established by the Convention now prevail throughout much of the region.

Promoting Citizens' Environmental Rights

The Aarhus Convention is unique among multilateral environmental agreements in the extent to which it promotes citizens' environmental rights. Its core principles – the right to information, the right to participate and the right to seek access to justice – empower ordinary members of the public to hold governments accountable and to play a greater role in promoting more sustainable forms of development.

The Convention put in place legally binding norms which give the public a major new role in decisions impacting the environment at all levels, global, national and local. It opens Governments to inspection and participation by grassroots communities in a way no other legal agreement has done before. It is also forging a new process for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements.

GMO amendment

At the second meeting of the Parties (Almaty, Kazakhstan, May 2005), long-running discussions on how the Convention should address the issue of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) came to a successful conclusion with the adoption of an amendment that expands the public's possibilities to participate in decision-making in this hotly-debated area.

27 ratifications by those member States that were Parties at the time of the adoption of the amendment are required to bring about its entry into force. During 2008, 12 member States and the European Community ratified the GMO amendment, bringing the total number to 18.



Not an official record - For information only

Convention's compliance mechanism gets into full swing

The Convention is facing new tests of its innovative compliance mechanism.

The mechanism, established by the first meeting of the Parties in 2002, includes an independent Compliance Committee elected to look into cases of possible non-compliance.

The Aarhus compliance mechanism is unprecedented among multilateral environmental agreements in the extent to which it gives the public, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a role in triggering a review of a Party's compliance. Numerous environmental organizations have taken advantage of this relatively open regime to challenge certain Parties over their compliance with the Convention.

At their third meeting in Riga (June 2008), Parties approved decisions calling on six of the treaty's then 41 Parties to take measures to bring their countries into compliance with the Convention. All of the Riga cases were triggered by communications received from the non-governmental community.

In 2008, a total of 13 communications from the public were received.



AARHUS CONVENTION
for our environment

Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) was adopted in May 2003.

As the first legally binding international instrument on PRTRs, the Protocol aims to enhance public access to information by establishing coherent, national registers of pollutants from industry and other sources. The Protocol is expected to exert a significant downward pressure on levels of pollution.

PRTRs also assist Governments to collect information on emissions of greenhouse gases and hazardous substances, thus contributing to the fight against global warming and toxic chemicals, which pose the most significant threats to the global environment and human health.

The Protocol on PRTRs to the Convention has been negotiated and adopted as an 'open' global protocol, in which all States and regional economic integration organizations can participate, including those which have not ratified the Convention and those which are not members of UNECE.

The Protocol is expected to enter into force in 2009.

Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy

The Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy contains information relevant to the implementation of principle 10 of the Rio Declaration at the global, regional and national levels around the world, and is probably the leading global repository of information on the topic. As of 2008, the Clearinghouse Resource Directory and News Archive contained more than 1,500 separate entries covering regional and global developments (see <http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org>).

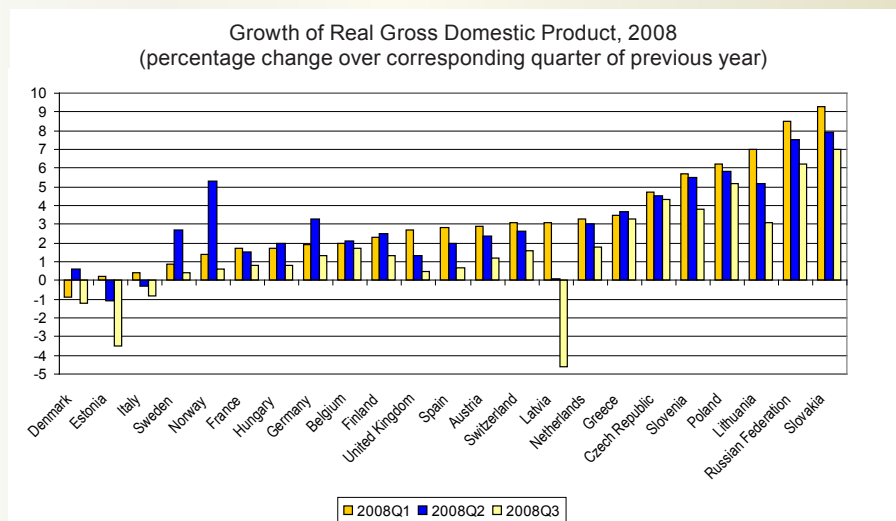
For more information contact
public.participation@unece.org
Website: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp>

The tumultuous financial markets and rapidly fading global demand are dampening economic growth prospects across the UNECE region. According to the most recent figures, all of the advanced European economies are heading towards zero or negative GDP growth rates in the fourth quarter of 2008 (year-on-year), while Denmark and Italy crossed that line already in two out of three previous quarters. And most emerging European markets, including the Russian Federation, are in an obvious slowdown.

Hit hardest by now are the economies of two Baltic States – Estonia and Latvia – where output in construction and major market service activities shrank by nearly one tenth in the third quarter of 2008 (year-on-year) as domestic demand shrivelled. Lithuania's GDP growth slowed down severely but remained positive thanks in part to some structural dissimilarity – the agriculture and energy sectors play a more important role in Lithuania's economy, and both recorded strong growth in the third quarter. The overall GDP growth in the third quarter of 2008 relied more strongly on agriculture, industry and construction, as was also the case in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

FACTS AND FIGURES

European wave of the economic crisis



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>), and national statistics.

Information Service
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0) 22 917 44 44
Fax: +41 (0) 22 917 05 05

E-mail: info.ece@unece.org
Website: <http://www.unece.org>

Not an official record - For information only