



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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It's just happened ...

Public to play a role in enforcing international law

The Compliance Committee established under the Aarhus Convention held its first meeting on 17-18 March. Under the new compliance mechanism the public, including NGOs, will have the right to formally challenge Governments that they believe are failing to comply with their obligations under the Convention, by bringing cases of alleged non-compliance directly to the attention of the Committee, which will then be obliged to make a determination on these cases. Compliance is increasingly recognized as a key issue for all international environmental treaties and the development of an innovative mechanism under the Aarhus Convention has been of particular interest to international lawyers. A particular challenge for the Committee will be the need to reconcile the supportive, non-confrontational, non-judicial nature of the mechanism, which is one of its defining features, with the fact that it will be deciding upon complaints from the public.

Second UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs

The Second Forum, 17-18 March, gathered together women entrepreneurs, their business associations, SME policy makers, representatives of Governments, international organizations and NGOs. It focussed on initiatives and best practices of Governments, private sector and other stakeholders aimed at improving access to financing and new technologies, issues that are especially relevant to transition countries. Women entrepreneurs face discriminatory treatment in access to bank loans and inadequate use of new technologies in developing business activities. They also remain outside most formal and informal networks, which provide information on the availability of credit and opportunities related to e-business. Women entrepreneurs in countries in transition benefit less from using ICT to develop their businesses, even if the number of women online has been rapidly increasing. Many of the participants were members of the UNECE virtual Portrait Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs (<http://www.unece.org/operact/gallery/>).

UNECE Excellent Women Entrepreneurs Awards for 2002

The 2002 Awards ceremony took place on 18 March. The winners of the contest, organized in recognition of the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the economic development and social progress of their countries, were: *Best Start-up Entrepreneur of the Year*: Israilova Ratkan, Chairperson of the Credit Union "Kairat-Bol" (Uzhen and Osh regions, Kyrgyzstan); *Most Innovative Entrepreneur of the Year*: Feryal Menemenli, Chairman and Owner of Doga Bitkisel Ürünler Sanayi ve Ticaret A.S. (Istanbul, Turkey); *Best Entrepreneur in Information Technology*: Sanja Penic, Manager of Digera d.o.o. (Zagreb, Croatia); *Best Entrepreneur in Craft*: Agamirzoeva Fatima Ayibkhan, President and Owner of Aygun company (Quba, Azerbaijan) and Salimova Makhfuza Hamidovna, Director and Owner of Sadbard company (Bukhara, Uzbekistan); *Best Entrepreneur Facing Additional Challenges of Disability*: Leona Szy, Owner and Managing Director of Kiskapu Ltd (Budapest, Hungary); *Best "3Rs" Entrepreneur: Reduce, Re-use and Recycle*: Leonina Doromian, Manager and Owner of SC "Cânepa Româneasca (Timisoara, Romania)

Best practice in the development of entrepreneurship and SMEs

The Forum on Best Practice in the Development of Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Countries in Transition (19 March) focused on the experience of Croatia and Slovenia. It aimed to identify the capabilities of SMEs in stimulating economic growth. Key emphasis was placed on the creation of a business-friendly environment, including good governance, conducive to the transformation of society towards a market economy, and the dissemination of good practices and provision of assistance to

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these two countries, which are lagging behind in the transition process. Attention was also drawn to accelerating the development of entrepreneurship and the SME sector in southeast Europe, as well as in the majority of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Forum was co-chaired by Ambassador Cek of Croatia and Ambassador Gosnar of Slovenia.

Expert Meeting on how to Become a Supplier of Large Enterprises and Transnational Corporations

The main goal of the Meeting, held on 20-21 March, was to help SMEs acquire a better understanding of the global markets and the process of internationalization in both transition countries and advanced market economies. The meeting reviewed best practices in the UNECE region, and discussed the requirements and standards of large enterprises, TNCs and cooperatives that SMEs should meet in order to make them more partnership-ready. It also reviewed the reasons why quality has become a pre-requisite to entering the world market and becoming a supplier of other companies, and the best practice of Government policies and TNC's experiences in providing special support programmes for SMEs to meet the requirements of suppliers, in outsourcing, subcontracting, franchising and in the creation of supply chains.

Expert Groups on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and on Heavy Metals

The two Groups were established under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution in readiness for entry into force of the 1998 Protocol on POPs and Protocol on Heavy Metals - each Protocol now has 14 of the 16 ratifications required, so entry into force is expected soon. The Expert Groups are assessing information ready for review of the Protocols and assisting Parties to evaluate information on substances that may be proposed for addition to the Protocols, once they have entered into force. The fourth meeting of the Expert Group on POPs (Oslo, 17-19 March), reviewed dossiers on three potential candidate POPs (dicofol, endosulfan and short-chain chlorinated paraffins) and prepared summaries on the information reviewed. The first meeting of the Expert Group on Heavy Metals (20-21 March), reviewed information available on heavy metals, especially on lead, cadmium and mercury, and drew up a detailed work-plan.

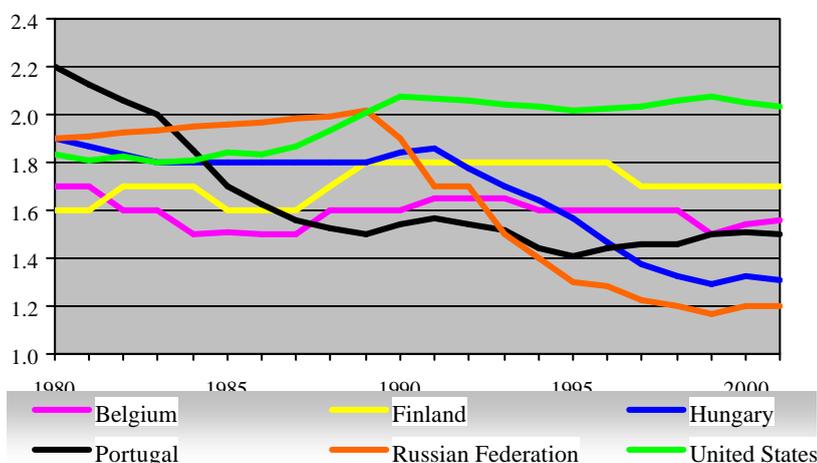
Coming up soon ...

The Seminar on Strategies for the Sound Use of Wood (Poiana Brasov, Romania, 24-27 March), organized jointly by the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, has as its objective to place sound use of wood and sustainable patterns of consumption in the wider context of sustainable development, and explore possible policy options for Governments and other stakeholders

- 24-28 March Specialized Sections on Standardization of Early and Ware Potatoes and of Seed Potatoes
- 27-28 March Ad Hoc Multidisciplinary Group of Experts on Safety in Tunnels (rail)
- 24-28 March Joint Meeting of the RID Safety Committee and the ECE Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (Berne, Switzerland)

Facts and figures:

Total Fertility Rates in selected UNECE countries



Sources: UNECE EAD/Population Activities Unit, based on data from WHO/Europe, and for the United States - National Center for Health Statistics.

Notes The following countries represent trends in their region:
 Belgium Western Europe
 Finland Nordic countries
 Hungary Central Europe
 Portugal Southern Europe
 Russian Federation Eastern Europe

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