



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 162 – 6-10 March 2006

Air pollution – Filling the gap in the European map

On 2 March 2006, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution welcomed Albania as its 50th Party. One of the gaps in the European map that has existed for more than two decades has at last been filled.

For 26 years the Convention has helped clean the air across the UNECE region. It has had major success in cutting the sulphur emissions, especially from sources such as coal-fired power stations, which caused acid rain problems in many countries of northern Europe. Levels of other major pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides (from motor vehicles and fossil fuel burning) and volatile organic compounds (from paints and solvents), are also falling. But because air pollution crosses national boundaries, the Convention is more effective once all countries in the region have joined.

To work towards cutting their emissions of air pollutants, countries belonging to the Convention share information on their emissions, levels

of air pollutants and environmental effects, and also on technology that can reduce emissions. With this scientific and technical knowledge they sign up to agreements under the Convention, called protocols, to agree on specific measures and cuts for certain pollutants. It is through the protocols that the Convention has achieved its successes.

Now that Albania has signed up, just a few countries in the region have yet to join. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are all working towards this goal through UNECE's (UN Development Account-funded) CAPACT project (see <http://www.unece.org/ie/capact>). Andorra, San Marino and Israel are also eligible to join. ❖

For more information contact Keith Bull (air.env@unece.org).

Question of the week

To Martin Williams, Chairman, Executive Body to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP)



What do you think about Albania joining the Convention?

We are always pleased to welcome new signatories to the Convention and welcome Albania to the community of CLRTAP. While Albania is not a big industrial country, it is of significant size and occupies a noticeable place on the European map. Albania joining is a significant step in that it completes the European map (with the exception of Andorra and San Marino). It is important for Albania as we know that experts in Albania have been working on getting parliamentary approval for accession for some years. Now that nearly all UNECE countries are Parties to the Convention, each new Party can be seen as a major step towards complete coverage of the region.

What are the next steps and future challenges?

Now that Albania has joined we need to consider how it can be involved in the Convention's work. We hope that Albania will be able to move towards signing up to Protocols and agreeing to emission reductions. We hope that Albania will be active in the Convention's work, especially the scientific activities that underpin the decision-making in the Convention. The Convention has a special focus on countries with economies in transition and we hope that we can work with Albania to solve some of its pollution problems. Some Central Asian countries are still making preparations for joining. Although almost all countries are Parties to the

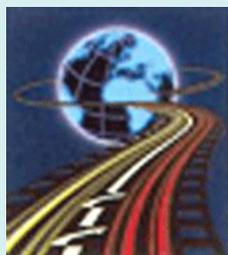


UNECE to host First Global Road Safety Film Festival

The First Global Road Safety Film Festival will be held on 23 March in Salle XIX in the Palais des Nations, hosted by the UNECE.

International jury

Addressing roads safety issues, the films, originating from all regions of the world, will be presented under the following categories: communication and campaigns, education for road safety and driver training, risk prevention for professional drivers, road safety innovations and television broadcasts. An international jury, made up of road safety experts, will evaluate and select the winning films on the basis of the clarity and relevance of the message, adaptation to the target, quality and originality of the script, technical qualities (sound, sound track, camera work, editing) and the cost-effectiveness ratio.



Promote international cooperation

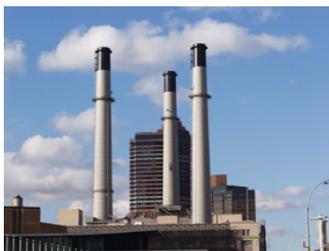
The Film Festival aims to promote international cooperation in road safety between the different regions of the world and will also serve as a springboard to promote the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week (23 to 29 April 2007) organized by the United Nations regional commissions and the World Health Organization. Organized by LaserEurope, an NGO involved in road safety initiatives, this festival follows previous film festivals that have been held at the European level since 1998, most recently in 2003 at UNESCO in Paris. ❖

Information regarding the Film Festival and registration forms may be obtained at: <http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/filmfestival.html>. The Festival is open to the public.

For more information contact José Capel Ferrer (jose.capel.ferrer@unece.org), Marie-Noëlle Poirier (marie-noelle.poirier@unece.org) or Christopher Smith (christopher.smith@unece.org).

European Community ratifies pollutant right-to-know treaty

The European Community has ratified the Aarhus Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers*, hereby committing its 25 member countries to setting up nationwide registers of polluting substances. This will make it easier for the public to get information about pollutants released to air, water and land from specific sites, as well as waste transferred off-site to other locations for disposal or incineration. Ratification of the Protocol by the European Community is additional to, and distinct from, ratification by its Member States.



Pollutant inventories

Pollutant release and transfer registers are inventories of pollutants from industrial sites and other sources. In countries that ratify the new Protocol, facilities will be required to report annually on the amounts of certain pollutants they release to the environment or transfer to other facilities. The information will then be placed on a public register. Where similar registers exist, the public disclosure of information about pollutant releases has led firms to improve their environmental performance. While the Protocol focuses mainly on pollutants coming from factories, it also provides a framework for reporting on

pollution from smaller, widespread sources such as traffic, agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises.

European-wide register

Under a regulation adopted in January 2006 to implement the Protocol, the European Commission and the European Environment Agency will establish the first European Union-wide pollutant release and transfer register. The first reports on pollutants being released or transferred in European Union countries will be published in 2009. ❖

* UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

For more information visit www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm or contact Michael Stanley-Jones (public.participation@unece.org).

VIDEO COMMISSION

For all those who could not attend the 61st session of the Commission, you can find clips of selected interventions at the following address:

<http://www.unece.org/video/video.html>

Question of the Week (cont.)

Convention, far fewer are Parties to Protocols, and it is implementation of Protocols that will make the Convention a success. In this regard the Convention has developed a strategy for working with and assisting countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and I look forward to Albania playing a constructive role in that two-way process.

Now that we are working well on implementation within the region, we need to consider the bigger geographic picture - the importance of hemispheric movement of some pollutants. The Convention can provide much knowledge and guidance to other regions of the world - the Convention is keen to collaborate and share knowledge with other regions of the world, not just to the EECCA countries, but more widely across the world. The Convention has set up a Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution that includes experts from countries outside the UNECE region. ❖

For more information contact Keith Bull (air.env@unece.org).

Coming up ...

7-10 March

World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)

8-9 March

Workshop on Prevention of Accidents of Gas Transmission Pipelines (The Hague, Netherlands)

7-8 March

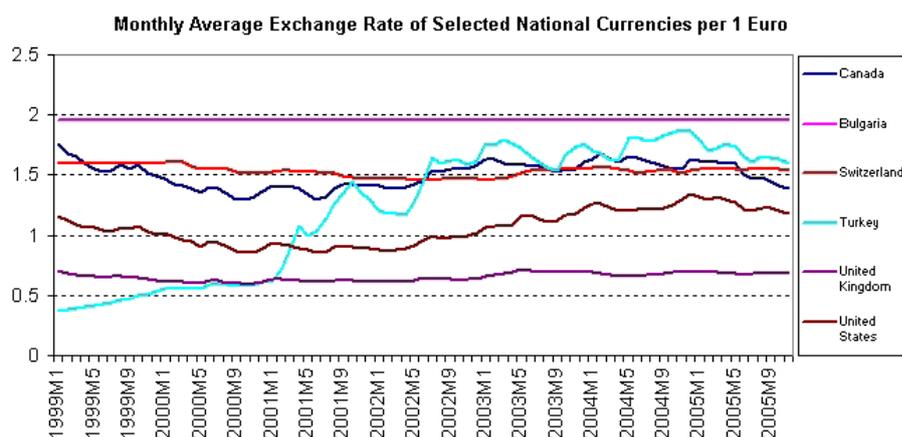
Informal Ad Hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (Bratislava, Slovakia)

For further information please contact:

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>

Facts and figures



The above graph shows monthly movements in the value of Euro against selected national currencies since the beginning of 1999. During the period between January 1999 and November 2005 the Euro depreciated against three of the selected currencies, remained stable against one currency and appreciated against two of the selected currencies. Between January 1999 and November 2005, the Euro depreciated 21.1% against the Canadian dollar, 3.8% against the Swiss Franc and 3.4% against the Pound. The normalised Bulgarian Leva (BGN) was the only selected currency with a fixed exchange rate to Euro. The normalised Turkey New Lira (TRY) was one of the two selected currencies against which the Euro appreciated between January 1999 and November 2005. The Euro appreciated 327.8% against the TRY, and 1.5% against the United States Dollar.