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Obstacles to enterprise development in the “catching-up economies”

International Conference “Reducing Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Encouraging Enterprise Development: Policy Options”

Palais des Nations, Conference Room VII
18-19 June 2007, 10:00 -18:00

Public-private partnerships UNECE Government representatives visit PPP projects in Israel

Under the auspices of UNECE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, an international conference on lesson sharing and capacity-building for successful public-private partnerships in the UNECE region was held in Tel Aviv, Israel, on 5-8 June

2007. Opened by Ms. Tzipi Livni, the Vice Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, and Mr. Paolo Garonna, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, the conference attracted over 300 participants from the public and private sectors.



Following this international conference, delegations from UNECE countries paid a number of site visits to examples of PPP projects operating in the Tel Aviv area. The purpose of these visits was to see first hand the contribution of such projects to sustainable development and to learn how these projects could be replicated in other UNECE countries. Participants included government officials from about 30 countries. This tour took place also as a part of the UN Development Account Project “Public-Private Partnership Alliance

Programme for Capacity Building in Infrastructure Development and Provision of Basic Services” undertaken in cooperation with UNECE, UNESCAP and UNECA.

The visit to the Ashkelon Desalination plant, located 20 kilometres south of Tel Aviv (see photograph) demonstrates how new technology financed on a PPP basis is providing much needed water to Israel’s agricultural sector and its fast growing cities. This plant is the world’s largest to use membrane



National and international experts from the UNECE region meet in Geneva this week to address the main problems confronting business operators and small companies in the so-called “catching-up economies” of the UNECE region.

In these economies, business operators often find it difficult to set up and operate small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Bureaucracies can be inefficient, taxes high, and regulations cumbersome. The financial markets are also underdeveloped, and access to enterprise finance is limited. This international conference will address these and other major obstacles to enterprise development and promotion in these countries. It will also review the country policies aimed at improving SME access to foreign markets.

The conference will include a round-table discussion on fighting corruption, which will focus on cross-cutting issues in public policy and governance. Participants in the debate will include government officials and representatives of international organizations and NGOs.

On the basis of good practices identified at the conference, participants will develop recommendations to government bodies in charge of enterprise development. ❖

For more information contact Iouri Adjoubei (iouri.adjoubei@unece.org) or Ljiljana Stancic (ljiljana.stancic@unece.org).
Website: <http://www.unece.org/ceci/eed.html>



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(reverse osmosis) technology by separating seawater into salt and potable water. Another

example of PPPs contributing to sustainable development is the Cross Israel Highway spanning 87 kilometres and connecting the south of Israel with its north. Here the delegation visited the control headquarters to see how this project had introduced state of the art technology to enhance safety and security, while using an automated electronic toll road system to avoid the need for toll booths.

A further visit to the world famous Weizmann Institute of Science showed how partnerships between industry and academia were successfully commercializing the new discoveries of the Institute from such things as 'Sky' satellite cards to the latest drugs in fighting cancer. Other site visits included Ashkelon Technological Industries and Light Train of Tel Aviv. These visits were a fitting culmination to the high profile international conference, which demonstrated the desire of the Israeli government to use PPPs as practical solutions for day-to-day problems while generating real benefits for society. ❖

For more information contact Geoffrey Hamilton (geoffrey.hamilton@unece.org).
Website: <http://www.unece.org/ceci/ppp.html>

Off the Press

The consolidated and up to date versions of the Convention on Road Traffic, of 1968, and the European Agreement supplementing it, of 1971, have just been published in English, French and Russian.

The Convention on Road Traffic, of 1968, also known as the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, regulates all facets of driving behaviour, such as speed and distance between vehicles, intersections and obligation to give way. It also details the technical conditions for the admission of vehicles to international traffic and provides models for domestic and international driving permits.

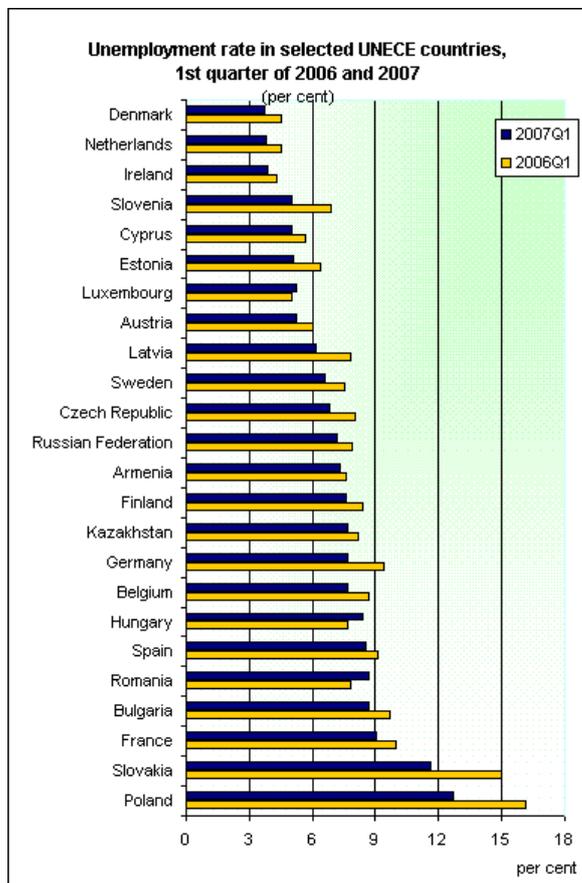
The European Agreement supplementing the Convention, concluded under UNECE auspices in 1971, is aimed at achieving greater uniformity in the rules governing road traffic in Europe. To this end, it establishes road safety standards that are stricter than those of the Convention. It also makes obligatory provisions that are of a recommendatory nature in the Convention.



The implementation in UNECE countries of these agreements and conventions has greatly contributed to lowering the number of people killed on their roads despite a sharp increase in road traffic. ❖

The publication may be ordered from the following website: http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/wp1publication.html#road_traffic_conv

Facts and figures



Downward trend of unemployment rates continues

Data on unemployment rates for the first quarter of 2007 confirmed an ongoing downward trend of the number of jobless people across the region over the last few years.

The most significant decrease was registered in countries with the highest unemployment rates: Poland and Slovakia. Unemployment in these two countries has been steadily falling since their accession to the EU that, on one hand, helped to boost economic growth and, on the other, encouraged a significant labour migration to other EU countries. In fact, after the EU accession, unemployment rates declined in all new member countries except Hungary and Romania.

The decline in unemployment in western Europe has also been relatively rapid compared with the previous economic cycles, thanks in part to the measures employed to make labour markets more flexible (less protected temporary contracts, reduced tax wedge, revised welfare-related benefits, etc). Overall, however, unemployment in the UNECE region is still relatively high, around 7% on average, and it is especially widespread among young people. ❖

Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data.htm>).
Note: The unemployment rate is the share of unemployed persons in the active population.