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Regional Cooperation Council

A staff-to-staff meeting between UNECE and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) for South Eastern Europe was held in Sarejevo on 2 June. The meeting, agreed to in February 2008 on the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the RCC, was organized to identify potential areas of concrete cooperation between the two organizations. Presentations on UNECE's work in energy, environment, transport, gender economics, trade, statistics, and public-private partnerships were made, after which staff discussed follow-up.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Taking advantage of his presence in Sarejevo for the above-mentioned meeting, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina arranged for the Executive Secretary to meet with the Prime Minister, Mr. Nikola Špirić. During that meeting, the Prime Minister emphasized his wish to cooperate with UNECE, the World Trade Organization and other international organizations, as well as expressing his support for the RCC.

Montenegro

At the official invitation of the Government of Montenegro, Mr. Belka then travelled to Podgorica for a series of meetings with the Government including the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and several line Ministers.



Milo Djukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, and UNECE Executive Secretary Marek Belka

Both the Prime Minister, Mr. Milo Djukanović, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Milan Roćen, stressed the importance of cooperation with UNECE. In greeting the Executive Secretary, Mr. Roćen, stated that UNECE's work seemed tailor-made to the needs of Montenegro. During subsequent meetings concrete cooperation with UNECE in a number of sectors was discussed. ❖

Aarhus Parties commit to strengthening environmental democracy in UNECE region and beyond

Ten years after its adoption, the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters have agreed to strengthen environmental democracy within the UNECE region and to promote its principles worldwide.

The Aarhus Convention is widely viewed as the foremost legally-binding instrument protecting the public's environmental rights. Addressing the high-level segment of the Third Meeting of Parties, on the closing day, Mr. Marek Belka, UNECE Executive Secretary, said the Convention's core principles "empower ordinary members of the public to hold governments accountable and to play a greater role in promoting more sustainable forms of development."

At the meeting, held in Riga on 11-13 June, the 41 Parties concluded their deliberations with the approval of a strategic plan that will set in place the future course of the Convention. In the plan, the Parties maintain that "the serious environmental,

social and economic challenges faced by societies worldwide cannot be addressed by public authorities alone without the involvement and support of a wide range of stakeholders, including individual citizens and civil society organizations."



Thirty-five national reports on implementation of the Convention, prepared in most instances with input from the public, reveal that the Parties have made significant progress in applying the Convention but also continue to face obstacles to implementation.

Six of the treaty's Parties were called upon to take measures to bring their countries into compliance with certain provisions of the Convention. The Meeting's review of compliance drew upon the findings and recommendations of the



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Convention's independent Compliance Committee made in the period 2005–2008. It is the second test of the Convention's compliance mechanism, which is distinctive in that any member of the

public having concerns about a Party's compliance with the Convention may trigger a process of formal review by the Compliance Committee.

The Meeting committed to strengthening the implementation of the public participation provisions of the Convention. This was in response to the findings under the compliance and reporting mechanisms that a number of member States face significant challenges in establishing detailed procedures ensuring meaningful public involvement. ❖

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Website: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html>.

Facilitating early-stage financing for innovative enterprises



International experience has shown that innovative enterprises often encounter difficulties when raising finance for starting and expanding their business. In countries with transition economies, in particular, commercial banks frequently reject project proposals by small and medium-sized companies because of inadequate collateral, uncertain cash flow prospects and insufficient clarity of business plans of applying companies. Barriers to bank financing are particularly high for those start-ups, the competitive strength of which is based on research and development, and innovation. In order to raise finance externally, they need to present compelling proposals to would-be

investors and lenders, understand various financing options available, their implications for the future financial status of their enterprise and the best ways to present the information required by financial intermediaries.

These and other issues of enterprise "investment readiness" were discussed at the Applied Policy Seminar *Early-Stage Financing and Investment Readiness of Innovative Enterprises* co-organized by the All-Russian Organization of Small and Medium Business "Opora Russia" and UNECE on 23 May in Moscow.

The Seminar addressed topics of major importance to early-stage financing of innovative enterprises: sources of external funding, which include specialized financial intermediaries such as business

angels and venture capitalists, and conditions rendering these enterprises attractive for external investors (convincing business plan, reliable assessment of the available tangible and intangible assets, good understanding of market trends and demand for goods and services to be produced, etc). The focus of the Seminar was on practical action required to improve the regulatory and institutional environment in this area.

Good practices identified at the Seminar are expected to facilitate policy measures aimed at reducing barriers to early-stage financing of innovative enterprises, and feed into the future capacity-building activities in transition economies of the region. ❖

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Facts and Figures

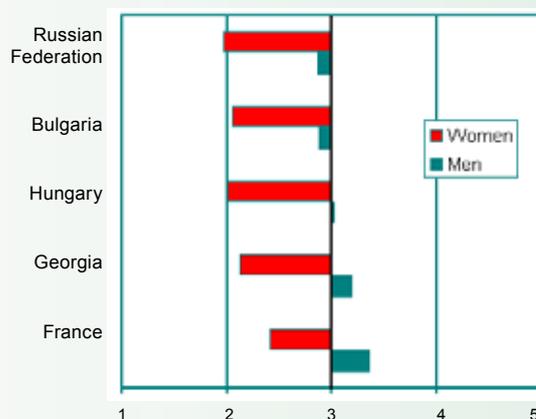
Distribution of household tasks as reported by 18-34 year-old men and women living in a co-residential partnership

The recent Conference on How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change (May 2008) discussed policy implications of research findings based on the UNECE Generations and Gender Surveys.

Household work is seen as an area where women traditionally contribute more than men even if in paid employment. Indeed, women report doing most of the household tasks in all the studied countries.

However, in some countries most men do not share this view regarding their own household. In the Russian Federation and Bulgaria they report doing slightly more household tasks than the partner. In France and to a lesser extent also in Georgia, men reported that the partner does a larger share than they do.

In all the studied countries, the perception of the distribution of household tasks differs considerably between men and women.



The graph shows the average index across six usual household tasks: preparing daily meals, doing the dishes, shopping for food, vacuum-cleaning the house, paying bills and keeping financial records, organizing joint social activities.

The answer categories were:

- 1 – always self
- 2 – usually self
- 3 – equally with partner
- 4 – usually partner
- 5 – always partner

Source: Hobcraft, John. *Circumstances of Young Adults. Paper presented at the Conference on How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change, Geneva, 14-16 May 2008.* <http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp/conf/2008Geneva.htm>.

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