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## Forests combat climate change, provide renewable energy and supply fresh water



20-24 October 2008

The first ever European Forest Week took place on 20-24 October 2008 in Rome, Brussels and all over Europe, to discuss the role of forests and the forest sector in combating climate change, providing renewable energy and supplying water. The Week highlighted measures necessary to fully utilize the sector's potential.

The Rome-based events brought together some 450 participants from the forest, water, energy, and housing sectors. The week marked the first ever

policy-level meeting between the forest and water sectors. In Brussels, a Conference by the European Economic and Social Committee addressed the "role of forests in meeting EU's climate change commitments." All over Europe, about 150 affiliated events took place in 30 countries, to highlight the potential of Europe's forests and what it takes to fully utilize it.

*Christopher Prins, Chief of the UNECE/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Timber Section, summarized the key facts and messages related to the main themes of the week:*



### Forests and climate change

There is more carbon in forests than in the whole atmosphere. There is seven times more carbon in Europe's forest than annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from all anthropogenic sources. Forests combat climate change by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere in trees, storing it in trees and wood products and replacing more carbon intensive fuels and materials. The construction and use of buildings accounts for up to 40% of GHG emissions: building green with sustainably produced wood can significantly reduce these CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

However, forests are also vulnerable to changes in the climate, which can cause storms, fires, insect infestations and melting of the permafrost. Foresters must develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies.



## Accession adds new Party to Aarhus Convention ...

Bosnia and Herzegovina deposited its accession to the Aarhus Convention\* with the United Nations Secretary-General on 1 October 2008, raising the number of Parties to the environmental democracy instrument to forty-two.

### ...Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers advances toward entry into force...

Sweden has become the most recent Party to ratify the Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR). The deposit of the country's instrument of acceptance was done on 15 October 2008.

Denmark ratified the Protocol on PRTRs on 13 October 2008.

Earlier, Latvia ratified and Slovakia accepted the Protocol on 1 and 24 April 2008, respectively. Croatia ratified and Norway approved the Protocol in the aftermath of the Convention's Meeting of the Parties (11-13 June 2008, Riga), the former on 14 July, the latter on 27 June.

The new actions raise the number of ratifications of the Protocol on PRTRs to twelve, eleven of these by member States, which count towards entry into force of the instrument. Sixteen member State ratifications are needed to bring the Protocol into force.

### ...and GMO amendment progresses

Romania and Lithuania have ratified the Convention's amendment on public participation in decision-making on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms. Their respective instruments of ratification were deposited on 29 and 30 August 2008.

So far, seventeen Aarhus Parties have ratified the GMO amendment, which was adopted in May 2005. Three quarters of the Parties to the Convention must ratify the amendment to bring about its entry into force.

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

\*Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters



continued

### Forests and energy

Wood energy constitutes about 65% of all renewable energy sources in Europe, and demand is growing, in the light of the ambitious targets set by policymakers. Harvesting more wood to meet the growing demand is feasible if policymakers, forest owners, forest-based industries, and wood users work together. At the same time, sustainability needs to be assured: biodiversity, and forests' regulating functions including climate, flood and disease regulation, and water purification must all be protected.

### Forests and water

Forests influence water quantity and quality, for instance by regulating floods and filtering water supplies. However, some forest management practices can harm water quality. Foresters and water specialists must work together, to address these issues, develop integrated landscape management strategies, and test Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes.

### Working together for forests

European forest sector organizations work together through established partnerships, between UNECE, FAO, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the European Commission, and many research, private sector and civil society organizations. Building on the approach of the European Forest Week, the forest sector is reaching out to society as a whole to communicate the solutions offered by the forest sector. Realizing the full potential of forests and their multiple services can make a lasting contribution to combating climate change, and in general to promoting the sustainable development of the region. \*\*

For more information on the European Forest Week, visit: <http://www.europeanforestweek.org>, or contact Kit Prins ([info.timber@unece.org](mailto:info.timber@unece.org)).  
Website: <http://www.unece.org/timber>.

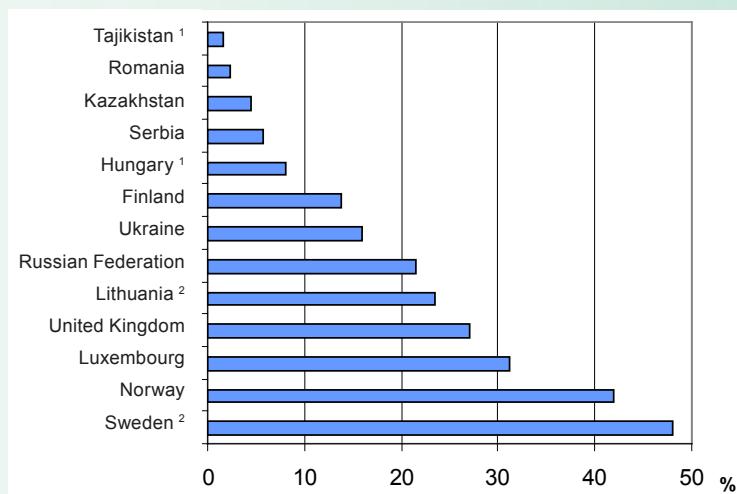
## Facts and Figures

The availability of child-care facilities and the enrolment rate of children in them vary considerably among UNECE countries. For instance, in 2006, the organized forms of child-care services covered nearly one half of the children under the age of 3 in countries such as Norway or Sweden. However, in some countries – Tajikistan, Romania, or Kazakhstan in the sample - less than 5% of small children were enrolled in such centres. The age of children at enrolment also varies. In general, child-care centres enrol children aged 0 to 2 years old. In Tajikistan and Hungary, the upper limit of enrolment age in such centres is 3 years old. In Sweden, where the parental leave extends through the first year of the child, organized child-care is widely accessible from the age of 12 months.

The possibility to use child-care services enables mothers or single parents to perform lucrative activities during the day. As an alternative to child-care centres, which may have limited places or may be costly when not subsidized, parents resort to babysitters or to extended family members to look after their children. However, in many countries where such child-care possibilities are limited, it is usually a mother who faces the need to give up her professional career, even if temporarily, and take care of the child at home. \*\*\*

### Child-care services in UNECE countries

Enrolment rate of children aged 0-2 in child-care centres, 2006  
(per cent)



Source: UNECE Gender Database.

Note: Child-care refers to formal child-care arrangements, public or private, such as group care in child-care centres (crèche) or registered child-minders based in their own homes looking after two or more children. Child-care refers to children at youngest age (typically from 0 to 2); pre-primary schools are excluded.

<sup>1</sup> data refer to children aged 0 - 3.

<sup>2</sup> data refer to children aged 1 - 2.