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UNECE and European Basketball Family join forces to promote road safety at EuroBasket 2009

In a Declaration for Road Safety signed on 17 September during the EuroBasket 2009, FIBA and FIBA Europe joined the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure, the Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism and UNECE in a plea to respect road traffic rules.

The EuroBasket 2009 Declaration for Road Safety – “because a true champion respects the rules of the game!” – draws a parallel between basketball and road safety stating that non-respect for rules results in unfairness, on the road as on the court. The consequences of not following the rules on the road are, however, much more severe and sadly, many people do not play by the rules when they get behind the wheel.

Bob Elphinston, FIBA President, Nar Zanolin, Secretary General, FIBA Europe, Tomasz Pólgrabski, Polish Vice Minister of Sport, Andrzej Grzegorzcyk, Director of the Secretariat of the National Council of Safety Road Traffic (representing the Polish Minister of Infrastructure) and Michalis Adamantiadis, Chief of the Transport Facilitation and Economics Section of UNECE’s Transport Division presented the initiative and formally signed the declaration on behalf of their respective organizations at a press conference held at Katowice’s Spodek Arena, where the last round of the tournaments was played.

In an effort to reach out to people’s everyday lives, the Declaration offers a new perspective on road rules. It tries to counter the “avoid getting caught” attitude with one of respect for fellow road-users. It also summarizes 7 simple rules which have proven beyond any doubt, time and time again, that they save lives:

- Do NOT use mobile phones while driving
- Do NOT drive whilst under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Stay within the speed limit
- Share the road safely with pedestrians and cyclists
- Wear seatbelts — every day, every time, both in the front and back of the vehicle
- Use approved child restraint systems
- Wear approved helmets while riding two-wheelers



Andrzej Grzegorzcyk (right) and Michalis Adamantiadis

This is not the first time the basketball community has teamed up with UNECE to promote road safety. During a conference in Greece in June 2009, Greek basketball champions signed a similar declaration (see [UNECE Weekly No. 326](#)). With the EuroBasket 2009 as a second step in the collaboration, it is hoped this promotional campaign can be extended to the FIBA World Championship in Turkey in 2010 to reach an even wider audience.

On a global scale, 1.2 million people die in road traffic crashes every year, with millions more injured and disabled. The Declaration makes the point that these crashes are NOT accidents but events that can be prevented through daily action and awareness.

Through its Road Traffic Safety Forum, UNECE has established a multilateral legal framework for road safety which covers all factors influencing international road traffic, including the driver and the vehicle, in the Convention on Road Traffic (1968), and which prescribes common norms for traffic light signals and uniform conditions for road markings in the Convention on Road Signs and Signals (1968). ■

For more information contact Line Konstad (infotransport@unece.org).

TEM session addresses motorway connections for Austria, Czech Republic and Poland



The interconnections of motorway and expressway networks was the main topic of discussion during a recent Trans-European Motorways (TEM) Project meeting. Representatives of the Ministries and/or General Road Directorates of Austria, Czech Republic and Poland discussed problems their respective countries face when it comes to interconnections, and which are primarily caused by budgetary limitations and environmental considerations.

The talks took place during the 51st session of the TEM Steering Committee in Budapest, 15-16 September. UNECE is the Executing Agency of the TEM Project.



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Motorway connections (continued)

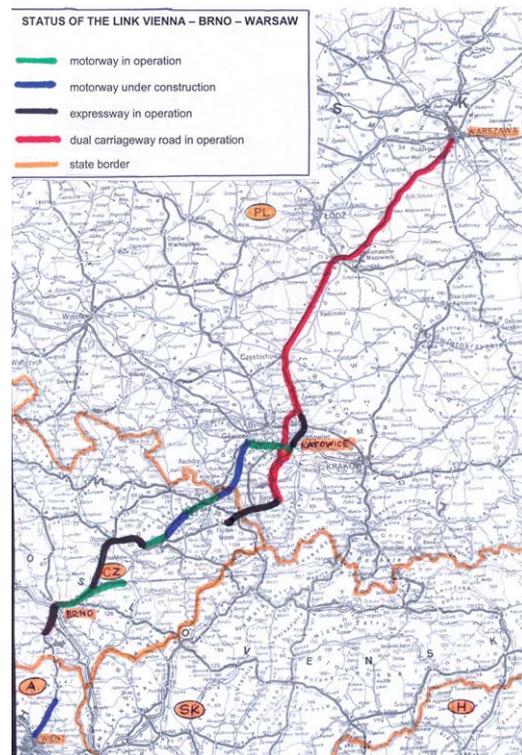
Following an exchange of information about the present status of all respective border crossings, the representatives concluded unanimously that the most important and urgent task is the construction of border sections on the TEM Vienna (Austria) – Brno (Czech Republic) – Warsaw (Poland) motorway/expressway link.

The opening of a planned border crossing between Austria and the Czech Republic (Drasenhofen/Mikulov, R52), will suffer a time gap of about three years due to unresolved environmental problems on the Czech side. The responsible Czech authorities will, however, do their best to accelerate the necessary decisions regarding the R52 expressway border section to commence construction as soon as possible.

On the Czech/Polish border, both sections of this motorway are under construction. The Polish A1 border section (Gorzyczki) is planned to be put into operation at the end of 2010. The Czech Government recently decided to accelerate the construction in order to open the D1 motorway border section (Vernovice) at the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012 at the latest. This would limit the period of diverting traffic to existing parallel roads to about one year. Both sides will remain in close contact to keep the transition period to a minimum.

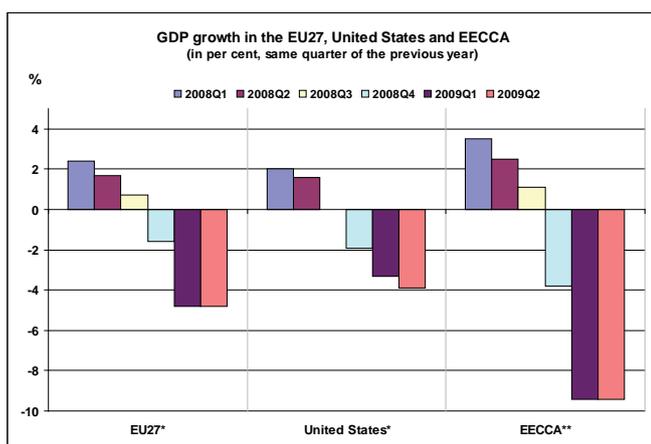
Based on a proposal by the Ministry of Transport, Austria, the session approved the assignment of Helmut Meelich (Austria) as acting TEM Project Manager. Mr. Meelich is already project manager for the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project and will manage TEM in addition until a full-time replacement is found. ■

For more information contact Line Konstad (infotransport@unece.org).



Facts and Figures

Economic downturn continued in second quarter 2009



Source: UNECE Statistical Database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>), Eurostat, CIS Statistical Committee and national statistics.

* Seasonally adjusted data

** Aggregate for twelve countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, earlier referred to as CIS. Percentage change for 2009 Q2 is an estimate based on data for January-March and January-June 2009.

The first estimates for the second quarter of 2009 show gross domestic product (GDP) falling further in the UNECE region. Seasonally adjusted year-on-year growth rates indicated a decline of almost 5% for the second consecutive quarter in the EU area. For the second quarter, Poland is the only EU country reporting growth compared to the same quarter last year. In the United States, the last two quarters' declines have been between 3% and 4%.

In the East European, Caucasus and Central Asian area the decline has been around 9% during both the first and second quarters. Compared to the first half of 2008, GDP still increased until mid-2009 in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The seasonally adjusted GDP grew slightly from the first quarter to the second in two major EU economies, Germany and France. This raised expectations among some economists that these and a few other European economies have reached the bottom and production is regaining. ■