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484

Statistics



Executive Secretary opened 60th Conference of European Statisticians

On 6 June, UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj opened the 60th Conference of European Statisticians that brought together Chief statisticians of 55 countries and 8 international organizations. He referred to the first Statistical Conference that took place in Geneva already in 1928 under the League of Nations and congratulated the Conference for the outstanding record of widely recognized results in developing statistics. One of these results is the adoption of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the code of practice for official statisticians, that have guided statistical work globally for 20 years.

This year the Conference held a seminar to share experience on the technological and methodological innovations that are transforming the way population and housing censuses are carried out in countries. The next census round will build on the lessons learned in countries. The second seminar marked the 20th anniversary of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The Fundamental Principles are today as topical as ever for ensuring the quality and independence of official statistics. Thus, countries proposed specific measures to help to achieve full compliance with the Principles.

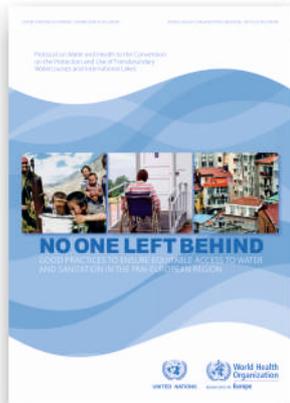
The Conference also discussed a new initiative in improving the statistical measurement of population ageing and its consequences. The profound impact of ageing on virtually all domains of society demands informed policy responses in many areas. The Conference examined how the production and communication of statistics can be better tailored for the needs of ageing-related policymaking and proposed concrete actions to be taken in this area. As a new feature, the work should involve experts representing both statisticians and policymakers, with the aim of increasing the policy-relevance of the statistics. Such setup is supported by the joint commitment of the UNECE Statistics and Population programmes to this activity.

In 2013, the Conference will discuss innovative approaches to improve access to statistical information and implications of the Rio+20 Summit decisions on statistical work, including the development of the post-2015 development indicators. □

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.06.ces.html>

Water



"Brown bag event" on good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation - 3 July

The Rio+20 Conference reaffirmed that access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation is a prerequisite for poverty eradication and protection of human health. General progress at the global level hides great inequities, both geographical and social, which hamper the full realization of the human right to water and sanitation.

Based on the publication "No one left behind", prepared in the framework of the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health under the leadership of France, the event will highlight inequity problems in the pan-European region. It will also showcase successful policy and practical measures that have been taken by Governments, water operators and civil society to redress these inequities.

The event is co-organized by the French Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, the French Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and UNECE. It will take place on 3 July 2012, from 1.30 pm to 2.45 pm in Room XVI. □

For further information, please visit:

http://www.unece.org/env/water/joint_meeting_wgiwrm_wgma.html

Aarhus Convention



UNECE welcomes ratification by Ireland of the Aarhus Convention

As of 20 June 2012, Ireland has become the latest country to ratify the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and its amendment on genetically modified organisms. This action raises the total number of Parties to the Convention to 46 and the Parties to the amendment to 27. Ireland also became the twenty-ninth Party to the Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

Commenting from Rio, where he is attending the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio+20), Sven Alkalaj, the UNECE Executive Secretary, "warmly welcomed" Ireland's ratification and drew attention to its relevance for the Rio Principles: "The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol are the world's only international legally binding instruments enshrining Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration", he said, observing that the ratification by Ireland "symbolically coincides with the twentieth anniversary of Principle 10". Looking to the future, Mr. Alkalaj noted that "the Aarhus Convention's powerful twin protections for the environment and human rights can help us respond to many challenges facing our world, from climate change and the loss of biodiversity to air and water pollution. Ultimately, these instruments provide the groundwork for building sustainable green economies and more stable, secure and inclusive societies."

Phil Hogan, Irish Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government said that his objective was "to make Ireland an environmental leader. Ratification of the Aarhus Convention will be another stepping stone to this goal."

Not an official record - For information only

This ratification acts as a reminder of the continuing relevance and universal importance of Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration adopted by 178 Governments which calls for access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

Ireland demonstrated its good will through supporting activities under the Convention even before the ratification and it has provided chairmanship to the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making, one of the most challenging areas of the Convention's work. □

For further information, please visit:
<http://www.unece.org/env/pp>.

Transport

UNECE and OSCE promote best practices at border crossings

The progress made in improving the efficiency of border crossings was the highlight of a round table discussion held in Geneva on 14 June 2012. The event was jointly hosted by UNECE and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

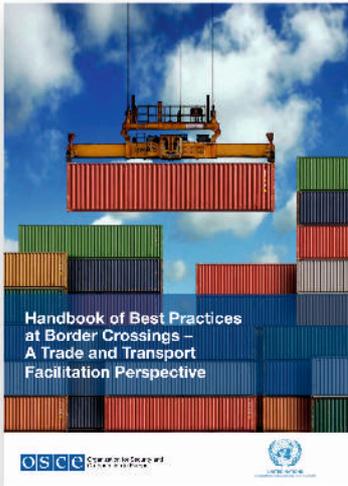
Throughout the 1990s, many borders crossing points, with their outdated infrastructure, lengthy bureaucratic procedures and corruption became symbols of inefficiency for transport operators. Last week's round table brought together participants from across the UNECE region and beyond to share ideas about the most effective methods and standards for improving border crossing efficiency.

More than 70 people from Customs and other governmental authorities from 31 countries, as well as representatives from the transport industry and NGO's took part in the round table. The discussions demonstrated remarkable achievements made by non-EU countries whose borders were once regarded as major obstacles to transport and trade. The round table also examined various methodologies to benchmark and measure the performance of various border control agencies.

Border crossing facilitation has been very high on the UNECE agenda since its establishment in 1947. UNECE administers around 15 conventions in the area of border crossing facilitation and Customs, many of which are now global in nature, including the Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982). In total, the Harmonization Convention now has 56 Contracting Parties from all over the world. The Harmonization Convention aims to reduce the number and duration of border controls through increased cooperation between organizations, countries and administrations.

The round table also featured prominent discussions on the recently released [Handbook on Best Practices at Border Crossings: a Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective](#). The Handbook was jointly produced through a unique partnership between the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and UNECE. It offers a rich array of reference material and more than 120 best practice examples at border crossings from the UNECE region and beyond. □

For further information on the round table please go to:
<http://www.unece.org/trans/events/140612.html>.



Economic Cooperation and Integration

UNECE promotes use of Information and Communication Technologies in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan introduced Internet services relatively recently, and the Government is carefully considering further usage of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to introduce new government services and to enhance the competitiveness of the country.

In this context, UNECE organized a Seminar on ICT Policy and legal Issues for the Heads of Ministries and Agencies in Ashgabat from 13 to 14 June 2012. The objectives of the seminar were: to enhance awareness on the complexities of the legal aspects of ICT; to prepare harmonized legal and regulatory frameworks that facilitate the development of e-government and other e-services in the country; to facilitate the conduct of domestic and international trade using ICT; to address issues related to ICT security and legal protection; and to create suitable regulations to fight against ICT related crimes.

A total of 65 senior policymakers and government experts, including 8 Deputy Ministers actively participated in the discussions and suggested a number of concrete actions on how to work across different ministries to harmonize their legal systems to facilitate knowledge-based development.

The seminar was one in a series of capacity-building activities which UNECE has been conducting in Central Asia to support high-level policymakers in their endeavor to create an enabling ICT policy and regulatory framework. It is part of the planned activities in 2012 of the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development in the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

In order to assist senior policymakers, UNECE has prepared a publication, "ICT Policy and Legal Issues for Central Asia – Guide for ICT Policymakers" in English and in Russian distributed at the seminar.

The Government of Turkmenistan expressed its appreciation to UNECE for organizing the seminar, jointly with the Ministry of Economy and Development and in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. Participating policymakers from various ministries expressed interest in organizing follow-up seminars on the same subject with the help of UNECE for targeted audiences in the future. □

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