

Environment



Field mission for the second environmental performance review of Croatia

Members of the UNECE secretariat and country experts visit Croatia this week as part of a field mission for the second environmental performance review of that country. The team will meet governmental officials, NGOs, business, academia and members of the international community living there.

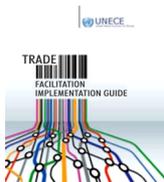
The review will focus on the implementation and financing of environmental policy, the integration of environmental concerns into economic sectors, and the promotion of sustainable development. It will also focus on the economic instruments promoting greener modes of production and consumption, as well as behavioural changes and investments in environmental protection and green projects. The review will assess the country's performance in generating and sharing accurate time-series data and environmental information on how it is sustainably managing its surface and ground waters and protecting its water ecosystems. It will also assess how the country is performing in reducing, reusing and recycling waste, and recovering energy. It will examine progress towards greater biodiversity conservation and the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation across economic sectors.

Finally, it will assess the tourism sector, focusing on reducing its pressure on the environment and improving its energy and resource use.

The review, which will contain draft recommendations to the country, will be discussed by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its meeting in Geneva next October, with the participation of high-level officials from the Government of Croatia. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/epr/welcome.html>.

Trade



Helping countries speed up cross-border trade

Together with our experts, we have designed a capacity-building programme for promoting our [Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide](#). This year, we're holding seven workshops in different regions of the world: Africa, Central and South-East Asia, Middle East, Europe and South America. Our key international partners in this programme include the other four UN regional commissions, UNCTAD, UNDP and the multilateral development banks.

The workshops will train participants from transition and developing economies in using the [Guide](#). The participants will explore opportunities and possibilities in areas such as simplification of trade documents, streamlining of procedures, cross-border management and automation of customs processes.

The first workshop took place last month in Turin, Italy. Participants included 30 high-level trade and customs experts from 13 countries of the Balkans, South-East Europe, the Russian Federation and Central Asia. Participants discussed how to speed up and reduce the costs of their countries' cross-border trade. They also explored ways in which they could use the Guide to advance their trade-facilitation work. Trade initiatives presented at the workshop included the Italian Trade Hub; the coordinated action to facilitate trade procedures and harmonize controls in the Balkan area; the Ukrainian capacity-building programme for customs officers; the Single Window in Azerbaijan and the Greek roadmap for trade facilitation.

Venues and dates of the next workshops:

- Kigali, Rwanda, 24-26 April
- Dubai, United Arab Emirates (to be confirmed), 13-15 May
- Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 10-13 June
- Dakar Senegal (to be confirmed), 18-20 June
- Bogotá, Colombia, 23-25 September, in collaboration with ECLAC
- Bangkok, Thailand, 20-22 November. □

For further information, please contact the coordinator, Maria Teresa Pisani at: tfig@unece.org.

Arctic States commit to combatting near-term climate change within the framework of the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution



At their meeting in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden, on 5 and 6 February 2013, Arctic Environment Ministers committed to take action to combat near-term climate change by addressing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs). Their actions will help achieve the objectives of the recently amended Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol) to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), the first legally binding document addressing SLCPs. The Protocol was amended in May 2012 to explicitly include obligations to reduce, by 2020 and beyond, the broader spectrum of SLCPs, notably fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), including black carbon, and nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, ground-level ozone precursors.

The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the eight Arctic States: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America. All eight Arctic States are members of UNECE and Parties to the Convention. At the meeting in February, among others, Ministers agreed that each Arctic State would compile national emission inventories for black carbon in line with the guidelines to be developed in the framework of CLRTAP, with the objective to begin submissions from mid-February 2015.

SLCPs are pollutants that stay in the atmosphere for a relatively short time in scientific terms (between a few days to a decade) and have a warming influence on the climate. The main short-lived climate pollutants are black carbon, methane and tropospheric ozone, the most important contributors to the human enhancement of the global greenhouse effect after carbon dioxide (CO₂). These SLCPs are also dangerous air pollutants, with various detrimental impacts on human health and ecosystems. Immediate and enhanced action to reduce short-lived climate pollutants has the potential to reduce climate change in the near term (According to the information stipulated by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, it can slow down the warming expected by 2050 by as much as 0.5 Celsius degrees).

In the Arctic, it is particularly important to take urgent action to reduce emissions of SLCPs, in addition to cutting emissions of CO₂ and other long-lived greenhouse gases. The unique ecosystem of the Arctic is under threat from rapid climate changes as the Arctic sea ice is rapidly diminishing, with cascading effects on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human living conditions. The threats of climate change are likely to have repercussions well beyond the Arctic. Large-scale "tipping points", such as the collapse of the Arctic summer sea-ice, accelerate the melting of the Greenland ice sheet and release methane from melting permafrost which may significantly speed up the global warming process.

Moreover, efforts by the Arctic States to reduce emissions of SLCPs will lead to substantial health benefits of their populations as well as contribute to protecting the Arctic from the environmental damage resulting from rapid climate change. Such efforts to foster the implementation of national commitments under the Gothenburg Protocol are exemplary and can be a guiding example throughout the region. □

More information on the amendments to the Gothenburg Protocol is available at: http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/multi_h1.html

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More information about the Arctic Council is available at: <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/>.

Facts and Figures

Varied growth of industrial production in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

After negative growth rates in 2009 following the economic crisis, industrial production in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia experienced relative high growth rates in 2010 and 2011, but lost some momentum in 2012, when it returned to more modest growth rates.

Industrial production in the Russian Federation grew by 8.2% in 2010 and 4.8% in 2011 but fell to 2.6% in 2012. Ukraine saw large variations in its industrial growth, from a fall of 22% in 2009 to growth rates of 11% in 2010 and 7.6% in 2011; and in 2012 production fell by 1.8%.

Another large economy of the region, Kazakhstan, saw similar declines, from growth rates of 10% in both 2010 and 2011, to 0.4% in 2012.

Armenia showed a different pattern, however. After a record high of 14.2% growth in 2011, industrial growth was back at 8.8% in 2012, the same level of growth as in 2010.

Azerbaijan experienced a different development: after a fall of 4.9% in industrial production in 2011, the country experienced positive growth of 1.1% in 2012. □

Not an official record - For information only

Growth on previous year in per cent



Source: UNECE Statistical Database, www.unece.org/stats.