

Environment



UNECE Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment becomes a global instrument

Through the entry into force on 26 August 2014 of its first amendment, the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context is now open to all United Nations Member States. "This opening will fill an important gap in international law and will further advance environmental impact assessment as an important tool for sustainable development. I therefore call upon all Parties to ratify this amendment as soon as possible" said Christian Friis Bach, UNECE Executive Secretary.

Since its entry into force in 1997 as a regional instrument under UNECE auspices, the Espoo Convention has considerably helped countries to develop national environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures and has forged international cooperation to prevent, manage and mitigate adverse environmental impacts. One notorious example of the concrete impact of the Convention has been its application in the complex Nord Stream offshore natural gas pipeline connecting the Russian Federation to Germany through the Baltic Sea. The substantial impact of the Convention on the development of national and international environmental law is also widely accepted, and it has been cited by the International Court of Justice as representative of the good international practice. Parties recognized the benefits derived from the Convention's application as early as four years after its entry into force and they adopted an amendment in 2001 to share those benefits with the global community.

To date, 24 States have ratified, approved or accepted the amendment, including the European Union. Non-UNECE countries will be able to accede to the Convention once all States that were Parties when the amendment was adopted in 2001 have ratified it. The following Parties still have to do that: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. At their last session in June 2014, Parties urged all those States to ratify the amendment to article 17 as soon as possible, for it to have effect (decision V/5-II/5). At the same meeting, Parties also unanimously decided to simplify the future accession to the Convention by non-UNECE countries, by lifting the requirement for their prior approval. To celebrate the upcoming entry into force of the amendment, a seminar on the treaty's globalization was held on 4 June and the role of international financial institutions as major player in capacity-building activities beyond the region discussed. □

For more information, please visit:

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

Water



UNECE participation in the World Water Week

UNECE will showcase the achievements under its Water Convention at a variety of events organized during the World Water Week that will be held from 31 August to 5 September 2014 in Stockholm.

Every year, the World Water Week, organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), provides a key forum to promote the important progress achieved under the UNECE Water Convention, from adaptation measures to climate change, to applying the river basin approach to the shared management of resources amongst neighbouring countries, or from dam safety in Central Asia to access to water and sanitation.

Following the entry into force on 17 August 2014 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the global opening of the UNECE Water Convention, a seminar organized by UNECE on 31 August together with numerous governments and organizations will discuss how the joint implementation of the two international instruments can support transboundary water cooperation worldwide.

This year the World Water Week's theme is dedicated to water and energy. Water, energy and land systems are inter-connected and have become increasingly complex and dependent on one another. Understanding the drivers behind these interlinkages, the so-called "nexus", is crucial when designing water, energy or agricultural projects. For example, the nexus approach could help increase the benefits from hydropower projects and enhance sustainable resource utilization while avoiding or minimizing potential

negative side-effects. Applying the nexus in a transboundary basin is even more complex. The first results of the thematic assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus carried out by UNECE and partners in a number of transboundary basins will be presented in Stockholm. □

For more information, please visit:
http://www.unece.org/env/water/www-2014_stockholm.html

EaP GREEN

Georgia initiates drafting of new law on environmental assessment procedures

One of the priorities of the Georgian Government after signing the association agreement with the European Union in June 2014 is to prepare a draft law on environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in accordance with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment and relevant EU legislation.

To initiate this process, UNECE, the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia and the LEPL Environmental Information and Education Centre hosted a workshop on 25 and 26 August in Tbilisi to kick-start the development of a new law on EIA and SEA. The workshop was organized in the framework of the Espoo Convention capacity-building and technical advice programme and funded by the EU "Greening Economies in the European Neighbourhood" (EaP GREEN) programme. This programme aims to support Georgia, and other countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, in strengthening its national capacity to integrate EIA and SEA procedures into its national legal, regulatory and administrative frameworks in order to join the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA.

Representatives of relevant Ministries, local authorities, members of Parliament and other stakeholders, such as NGOs, consultants and private sector representatives were invited to take part in this event.

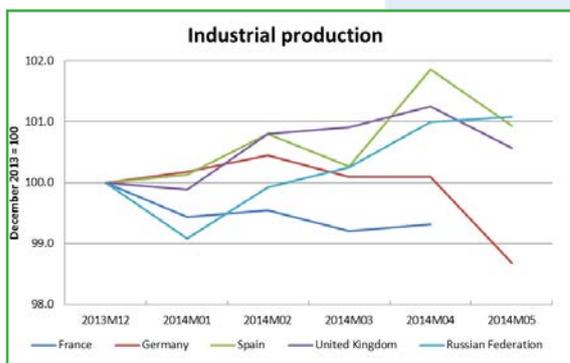
Participants in this workshop got familiar with the requirements of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, existing European practice in developing EIA and SEA legislation and the results of the gap analysis of the national legislation related to implementation of the Convention and the Protocol. They also reviewed the findings of the UNECE guidance on enhancing consistency between the Convention and the environmental assessment process within the framework of State ecological expertise in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In addition, they were invited to provide inputs to the draft outline of the law on EIA and SEA and to develop recommendations to the Government of Georgia on how to fully comply with the Convention and the Protocol.

Once the legislation is developed and adopted, proposed national and local development projects, plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant impact on the environment will be subject to environmental assessment procedures. This will foster Georgia's transition to a green economy, improve planning and programming, build public trust and confidence in decision-making, help identify new opportunities for development and save time and money by avoiding costly mistakes and severe environmental effects. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35879>

Industrial production growth rates differ widely in the region

Facts and Figures



The growth in industrial production in large European economies showed different paths in the first months of 2014. In the largest Western European economy, Germany, industrial production was almost constant during the first four months of 2014, but dropped by 1,3% in May to 1,3% below December 2013. France experienced a decrease in industrial production of 0,7% from December 2013 to April 2014.

The largest increases in industrial production were seen for the Russian Federation, which went up by 1,1% in May 2014 compared to December 2013, and for Spain, which went up by 0,9% in the same period. The United Kingdom experienced an increase of 0,6% over the first five months of 2014.

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, compiled from national and international (CIS, EUROSTAT, IMF, OECD) official sources. □

For more information, please visit: www.unece.org/stats/data.

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