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Public Private Partnerships

Launch of new initiative to increase capacity of Governments to undertake PPPs

Many transition economies are facing an infrastructure gap between the infrastructure investments required for the future and the capacity of the public sector to meet those requirements from traditional sources.

These infrastructures include, inter alia, transport, energy, water, as well as health and education. Bridging this gap will demand innovative approaches.

One approach that interests many countries is public-private partnerships (PPPs). However, the skills required to undertake PPPs are complex and there is a need for training and capacity building within governments if PPP programmes are to be successful.

New team of specialists starts work

In order to address this challenge a new UNECE Team of Specialists on PPPs met in Geneva on 28-29 February. This Team is working under the auspices of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration.

One of the main objectives of this first meeting of the Team of Specialists was to launch a capacity building programme that will include exchange of good practices, elaboration of PPP training modules, conducting of national training programmes and provision of policy and project support.

The new Team consists of experts in PPPs drawn from the public and private sectors, as well as the academic community. It is expected that a pilot project using a number of the training modules will be organized in Moscow in October 2008.

For more information contact Ljiljana Stancic (ljiljana.stancic@unece.org).
Website: <http://www.unece.org/ceci/ppp.html>.

International cooperation on energy efficiency

Working together for a low-carbon economy

A conference on the topic will take place on 28 May at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Organized by the UNECE – through its Steering Committee of the Energy Efficiency 21 Project – the International Energy Agency and the Energy Charter Secretariat, the Conference will bring together senior experts from governments and industry and officials from international bodies to discuss ways to improve energy efficiency outcomes through enhanced international cooperation. It will address questions such as:

- How can post-2012 rules best address the need for an improved investment climate for energy efficiency?
- How can barriers to investment and technology transfer be overcome?
- What kind of global energy efficiency integration is needed to solve these problems, and how can it be promoted?

Through this conference, energy efficiency policies globally should be improved for governments and industry.

For more information contact Charlotte Griffiths (info.energy@unece.org) or visit <http://www.encharter.org/index.php?id=285>.

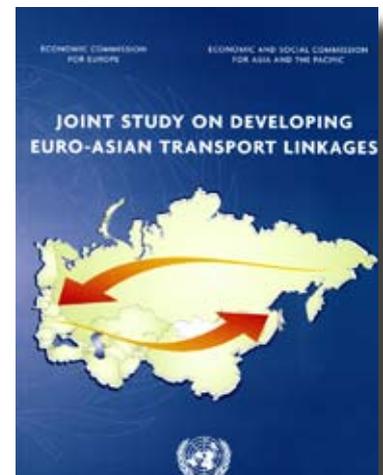


Euro-Asian transport linkages

UNECE and UNESCAP have just published the study entitled “Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages”.

Completed over the period 2003-2007, the study included the identification of the main Euro-Asian inland transport routes and the prioritization of 230 projects along these routes.

It incorporates the development of a GIS database and maps, as well as the initial analysis of transit transport obstacles and recommendations for dealing with them, as presented at a number of national capacity-building activities pertaining to trade and transport facilitation.



It is hoped that this analysis will help provide a development framework for the on-going modernization of the Euro-Asian transport network.

The development of these transport links is a long-term process that requires first and foremost strong political will and commitment of the countries concerned. It also requires the careful use of scarce financial resources, and an appropriate balance between new development and maintenance/improvement of existing transport infrastructure.

Available from http://www.unece.org/trans/MinisterialITC70/min_study.htm.

Five new ratifications to the Genetically Modified Organisms amendment ...

Parties to the Aarhus Convention* have deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General five new ratifications of the amendment on public participation in decision-making on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms.

At the ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties in February 2008, Sweden announced that it was in the process of depositing its instrument of ratification of the amendment, joining the earlier acceptance of the amendment by Moldova on 7 December 2007 and ratifications by the Czech Republic, on 29 January, and Estonia and the European Community, on 1 February 2008.

Sweden's deposit, which was received on 15 February 2008, raises the number of ratifications of the GMO amendment to nine. Three-quarters of the Parties to the Convention must ratify the amendment to bring about its entry into force.

... and one new ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs are announced

The Netherlands has become the most recent Party to ratify the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. The deposit of the country's instrument of acceptance was done on 11 February 2008.

This raises the number of ratifications of the Protocol to six, five 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.

The Convention continues to have 41 Parties, the most recent ratification being Croatia's on 27 March 2007.

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

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) of 25 February 1991

Accession: Serbia (18 December 2007)

International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods, Geneva, 21 October 1982

Entry into force of annex 8 to the Convention (20 February 2008)

See <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/En/lateste.pdf>.

Coming up...

11-14 March
World Forum for
Harmonization
of Vehicle
Regulations
(WP.29)



Facts and Figures

Food prices soar since mid-2007



Source : UNECE data base and national statistics

In the second half of 2007, inflation gathered momentum in most UNECE countries. Annual inflation turned out higher than forecast in the Euro area and the United States and in many other countries. By January 2008, year-on-year consumer price growth rates were in two digits for a third or fourth consecutive month in many emerging European economies and in some eastern EU member countries. Turkey, where inflation decelerated in the course of 2007, was one of the exceptions.

Escalating food prices were an important factor behind the acceleration of inflation. In January 2008, food prices were 20-30% higher than in January 2007 in a number of UNECE countries. Some countries resorted to price controls on staple foods: for instance, under an agreement concluded between Russian food producers and major retail chains, prices of milk, eggs, vegetable oil, bread and kefir (a fermented milk drink) were frozen from 24 October 2007 to 31 January 2008 (the freeze was recently extended for a further three months). This helped to contain the average rise in food prices included in the official consumer basket at 16% (year-on-year) in January 2008.