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**First Regional Workshop
of Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II:
Facilitation of Euro-Asian Transport in the ECO Region**

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 27-29 April 2009

With financial support from the Russian Federation, the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) initiative is making progress. Following the first EATL Expert Group meeting in September 2008 in Geneva, a regional workshop on “Facilitation of Euro-Asian Transport in the ECO Region” will take place in Tehran on 27-29 April.

The workshop — co-organized with the Tehran-based Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) — will focus on border crossing challenges/facilitation and the development of new rail routes such as Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty. The workshop participants will include transport and customs officials from ECO governments, countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Mongolia as well as international organizations.

During the workshop, one day will be set aside to discuss the implementation of the TIR Convention as all ECO countries — except Pakistan — are TIR Contracting Parties. The TIR component will be aimed at capacity building of Customs officials and road transport operators. It will provide detailed information on the functioning of the TIR Customs transit regime, its advantages for Customs authorities and the road transport industry.

It will also inform participants about the respective roles and responsibilities of various actors involved in TIR operations such as governments, transport operators, national associations, International Road Transport Union, TIR Administrative Committee and TIR Executive Board.



The next EATL Expert Group Meeting and Inter-regional Workshop on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Links will be held on 10-12 June 2009, in Beijing organized in partnership with, and at the invitation of, the Ministry of Transport of China. *

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Better houses rather than more power plants Energy efficiency workshop



Investing in housing energy efficiency is more effective than building new power plants, concluded the first UNECE Workshop on Energy Efficiency in Housing held on 21 and 22 April 2009 in Sofia. According to EU data, for instance, for every euro invested in the sustainable refurbishment of housing, 2 euros that would have been needed for the production of energy are saved.

In general, retrofitting homes in an energy-efficient way and building new houses with energy-saving technologies also brings direct benefits both to families’ health and to their purses. In addition to improved indoor climatic conditions, it is estimated that each household can save from €200 to €1,000 a year.

The benefits of investing in energy efficient homes go beyond individual advantages, however. They can provide tools to address both the financial



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Energy efficiency workshop (continued)

crisis and climate change. Some countries have already seized on the opportunity to invest in housing refurbishment to create new jobs and boost their national economies. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has singled out building as the sector with the greatest potential for reducing projected baseline emissions by 2020.

The Sofia workshop highlighted that retrofitting multi-storey family buildings is an urgent need in many countries in the UNECE region. In Bulgaria alone, the multi-family housing stock needing refurbishment numbers 80,000 units for over 2 million people. Refurbishment programmes thus offer an opportunity for energy-efficient solutions that can lead to considerable energy savings for countries.

Much potential exists for buildings to drastically reduce their energy consumption and reach the zero emission target. Examples of passive housing discussed during the workshop showed that low and zero emissions – and even houses producing energy and returning excesses to the common network – are not science fiction, but a reality that needs to be supported by the right technologies, legal frameworks and financial schemes.

Lack of knowledge of what the housing sector can offer in terms of energy efficiency impedes government and private sector investment in the area. In addition, a number of constraints hamper the sector's ability for innovation, including outdated legislation, organizational barriers and technological backwardness.

Participants presented examples of energy-efficient housing from throughout the UNECE region as well as related financial and carbon offsetting mechanisms and supporting policies. Specific case studies came from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and Sweden.



The conclusions and recommendations from the workshop will pave the way for the development of an Action Plan on Energy Efficiency in Housing for the UNECE region.

Its main elements will be developed through the second UNECE Workshop on Energy Efficiency in Housing, to be held from 23 to 25 November 2009 in Vienna. A call for papers for the Vienna workshop, to focus on existing and proposed solutions and measures, will be issued in the coming weeks by the UNECE secretariat. *

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FACTS AND FIGURES

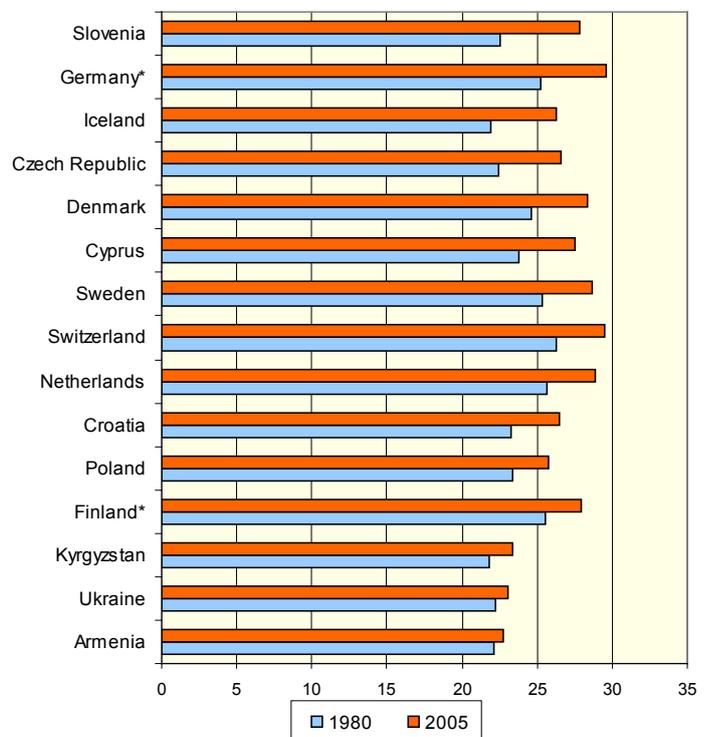
Women are postponing birth of first child

From 1980 to 2005 the mean age of women at birth of first child increased from 23 to 26 years in the UNECE region. Thus, in 2005, the oldest women at the birth of first child were found in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands (between 29 and 30 years). The youngest mothers were found in Armenia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (around 23 years).

The increase in age from 1980 to 2005 varies from 1 to 5 years between countries: the highest increases are recorded in Slovenia (5.3 years), Germany and Iceland (4.4 years). The lowest increases of only one year or less are observed for Armenia and Ukraine.

A high average age of women at first birth is normally associated with relatively low total fertility rates because of the shorter period potentially available for childbearing. The lowest fertility rates are recorded in Switzerland, Slovenia, the Netherlands and Sweden. *

Mean age of women at birth of first child,
selected UNECE countries 1980-2005



* 1980 data refer to children born in marriages.

Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database <http://www.unece.org/stats/data>.