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Greek basketball champions call for safer roads

Greek basketball champions have lent support to the road safety cause as they called for “team work and fair play on basketball courts and on our roads”, at a UNECE conference in Halkida, Greece (25-26 June).

A declaration signed by national basketball champions as well as International Basketball Federation (FIBA) president George Vassilakopoulos, the Greek national team coach Thanassis Papadimitriou and former national coach Kostas Politis, brings the idea of team spirit to driving, concluding: “*Foul play always ends up hurting someone. Let us start now to work as a team and play fair in traffic. As athletes, it is up to us to enforce it on the court. But it is up to all of us to practise it on the road.*”

The basketball players, represented by Franciscos Alvertis for the men’s national basketball team and by Vina Malti for the women’s national team, underlined that on the road, as on the basketball court, there are players, a field and rules that must be followed to avoid accidents and, on the road particularly, prevent disability and death.

The basketball community is no stranger to road traffic crashes. The legendary Serbian basketball player Radivoj Korac died in a car crash at age 30 in 1969. More recently, Drazen Petrovic, a Croatian national team player, was killed on the German motorway in 1993, four and a half months before his 29th birthday. He was not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the crash.

“*Basketball and road safety are not so unrelated*”, said Vassilis Skountis, a well-known sports journalist and TV broadcaster in Greece. “*They are both about a journey – a journey towards safety through respect of rules and fair behaviour.*”

The basketball declaration will be signed by the entire Greek national basketball team in July. It will be brought to European matches for other countries’ national teams to sign and hopefully it will make it all the way to the world championships. ■



Franciscos Alvertis signing the declaration

For more information see http://www.unece.org/press/pr2009/09trans_p05.htm, or contact us: infotransport@unece.org.

The basketball declaration can be downloaded from http://www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/unda_halkida.html.

Agricultural quality standards

Regional Workshop on Agricultural Quality Standards and the Use of Standards in Technical Regulations

Osh, Kyrgyzstan, 14 - 17 July

Organized by UNECE in partnership with the Kyrgyz National Institute for Standardization and Metrology (Kyrgyzstandart)

The purpose of the four-day workshop is to:

- Promote the use of the UNECE standards for fresh fruit and vegetables and dry and dried produce as international references
- Encourage application of the standards in Central Asia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States
- Explain how the standards are interpreted in the export markets of the Russian Federation and European Union countries
- Explain how the standards can be used in technical regulations
- Invite participants to take part in UNECE work on drawing up and revising standards.

The event will be opened by the Governor of the Osh region, Mr. Aaly Karashev. It will bring together international organizations, government agencies, research institutes, producer associations, traders and growers from nine countries to exchange experiences and technical knowledge.

Applying the UNECE standards would help them grow quality produce both for domestic consumption and for export markets. In addition, training will be provided to countries of Central Asia on how to interpret standards for several products and how to apply them in practice. The event will include on the first day a technical visit to a nut-growing enterprise.



This workshop is the fourth in a series of UNECE development-related activities, financed from the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund and the United Nations Development Account.

Download programme: http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/promotion/2009_Kyrgyzstan-Programme.doc.

Website: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr>.

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Better border crossing for the road industry

The road industry could see an efficiency boost with the implementation of a new legal framework designed to facilitate border crossing procedures.

According to International Road Transport Union (IRU) estimates, one third of the time it takes to transport goods by road is spent at borders – waiting. The new Annex 8 to the UNECE Harmonization Convention* tackles five key elements that can improve the situation: infrastructure, prioritization of certain types of cargo, weighing certificates, visa procedures and implementation.

The Annex entered into force on 20 May 2008. A seminar organized on 18 June by UNECE and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation took stock of the implementation process. The European Union, World Customs Organization, government officials, representatives of the transport industry and other experts in customs and border crossing shared experiences and recommendations for further action.

“We are working with the idea of shifting the main control of goods transport away from the borders and towards the places of departure or arrival,” said Eva Molnar, Director of UNECE Transport Division. *“At crossing points, controls will be replaced by verification of internationally standardized documentation and certificates, thus optimizing the transition from one country to another.”*

**The International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (Harmonization Convention, 21 October 1982) establishes commonly agreed requirements for coordinated border management and reduction of border formalities as well as the number and duration of all types of border controls of goods.*

53 countries and the European Community are Contracting Parties to this Convention.

Annex 8 provides:

- Guidelines and minimum requirements for suitable infrastructure at borders
- Facilitation of procedures for goods, particularly for urgent consignments such as live animals and perishable goods
- Standardized weighing procedures and international vehicle weight certificates
- Facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers
- Implementation monitoring.

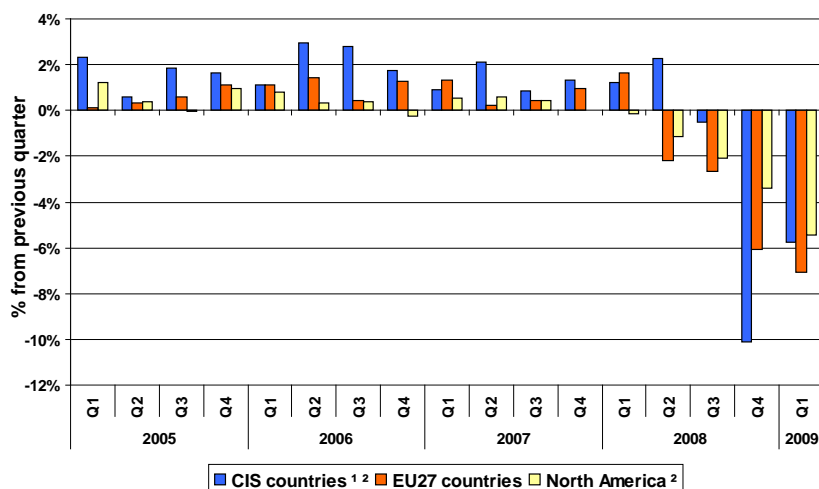
For more information about the event, including copies of presentations, visit <http://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/welcome.html>, or contact infotransport@unece.org.



FACTS AND FIGURES

Industrial production contracted further in the first quarter of 2009

Seasonally adjusted industrial production
growth rates from the previous quarter



Source: UNECE Statistical Database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>)

Note: Data in this article are seasonally adjusted to allow development to be compared to the previous period thus providing faster indications of economic fluctuations.

¹ No data from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

² Data aggregated by gross value added in industry in 2005.

The decline in economic activity has been most noticeable in industry and the signs of its recovery remain weak. The pace of contraction accelerated in the first quarter of 2009 in both the European Union and North America. Industrial production edged down also in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States by almost 6% from the previous quarter.

The slowdown began at the end of 2007 in North America. In the EU, industrial production started declining after a relative peak in January 2008, whereas in the CIS region the industrial production plummeted somewhat later, after mid-2008.

In April 2009 the decline in industrial production continued, also levelling off in some countries: Denmark, Italy, Kazakhstan, Romania and the United Kingdom. Two months of consecutive growth was observed in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Latvia and Poland. As a leading indicator, the industrial new orders kept declining in the EU and Canada, but increased in the United States. The economic sentiment indicator anticipates a better situation for the EU with a rebound from historic lows in April and an increase in June for the third month in a row. ■