



# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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## Trade Week at the UNECE

As globalization continues to open new possibilities for trade, many countries, despite having goods available for trade, are not yet able to enter into the new global marketplace because of the need for their products to meet divergent health and safety regulations in different countries. Addressing such divergent regulatory requirements will be one of the many topics talked about this week, 19-23 June, during three UNECE conferences on Trade.

### Harmonized regulations

The week will begin with the 16th session of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies, a key objective of which is to discuss and share ways other countries can better harmonize their regulations to reduce technical barriers to trade.

### International Forum

This will run back-to-back with the newly formed Committee on Trade's annual International Forum: "A Common Regulatory Language for Global Trade." The International Forum, 20(pm)-21(am) June,

will shift its focus to a broader perspective and look at the regulatory environment on a global as well as a regional level. The week of meetings will conclude with the 1st session of the Committee on Trade which will look at the results from the International Forum and move forward with implementation of the trade related parts of the UNECE reform adopted early this year.

The International Forum marks an important opportunity for participants to learn more about how countries throughout the world address regulatory policy and what frameworks they have in place to prevent regulations from becoming technical barriers to trade. The stated purpose of the Forum is threefold: to analyse different regulatory approaches used in Europe, North America, CIS and other regions (Asia and Latin America), to look at the importance of good regulatory policy for the integration of countries into the global economy, and to learn about the role of UNECE recommendations and legal instruments in the regulatory environment for trade. Some of the questions to be asked at this Forum are: "How can regulatory convergence help create

### Question of the week



To Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the Trade and Timber Division

Why do we need trade regulations?

Because trade regulations provide legitimate health

safety and environmental protection to a country's citizens as well as allowing governments to pursue legitimate policy objectives, such as preventing trade in endangered animals.

Why is it better for trade regulations to reference international standards?

Because this facilitates free trade by removing invisible barriers to trade and it also helps to keep regulations up-to-date in a constantly changing world.

All over the world, countries protect their citizen's health and well-being by adopting regulations for commercial products. These national regulations span all sectors of production from agricultural guidelines on the size and maturity of apples to electrical voltage requirements for home televisions. These national standards, while important consumer protections, often create invisible barriers to international trade by preventing the exchange of goods between two nations with differing regulations. For example, if one country wanted to export radios to another country, the radios made in the exporting country would have to meet the technical and safety regulations of the importing country. If the two countries have not harmonized their regulations for radios, then the trade may not happen.

As the world becomes increasingly globalized and more countries are capable of international trade, these barriers to trade multiply because with more countries on the international marketplace comes an increasing number of divergent national regulations.

## Monitoring Radioactive Scrap Metal

What do your watch, a smoke detector and a piece of metal from a nuclear facility all have in common? The answer is that they may all three trigger an alarm should they go through a radioactivity detector. In a world where we are encouraged to recycle more, the metal industry is a success story with over 50% of their supplies coming from recycled material.

Yet recycling can come at a high cost in this sector, as a number of workers and scrap yards have found.

If the recycled metal scraps are not well monitored, radioactive sources – be they for example, from smoke detectors, contaminated pipes, medical apparatus,



Radioactive chemical tank

or nuclear facilities – can be melted as the metal is recycled and contaminate means of transport, scrap yards and entire steel mills. Such incidents may not only have serious consequences for the environment and public health, particularly for people working at such installations, but also result frequently in the closure and clean-up of steel facilities, not to mention the loss of trust in the use of recycled materials.

To avoid major incidents, industries and regulatory bodies will need to spend often very large amounts of money to isolate the radioactive metal sources and determine what to do with them depending on the amount of radioactivity involved. In addition, metal scrap is a major commodity that is traded internationally and transported over



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large distances across the globe. As it crosses borders, it is subject to widely different procedures to check for and deal with any signs of radioactivity.

In seeking to proactively address this cross-sectoral issue UNECE, as part of its work on the transport of dangerous goods, border crossing and trade facilitation, hosted on 12-14 June an Expert Group Meeting on Monitoring Radioactive Scrap Metal to agree on "Recommendations on Monitoring and Response Procedures for Radioactive Scrap Metal". These recommendations are based on national and international regulations and industry standards and describe good practices to effectively prevent, detect and respond to radioactive scrap metal. They will encourage further cooperation, coordination and harmonization at national and international levels.

The meeting brought together experts from 26 countries, including also countries outside the UNECE region, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and South Africa. It also gathered representatives from the European Commission, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the metal and recycling industries. The recommendations will now be finalized by the UNECE secretariat and made widely available. ❖

For more information see: <http://www.unece.org/trans/radiation/radiation.html>.

### Coming up ...

19 June

Working Group on Brakes and Running Gear

19-21 June

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies

20-23 June

World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)

21-23 June

Committee on Trade

21-23 June

Joint UNECE/Eurostat Seminar on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (Sofia, Bulgaria)

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### Trade Week (cont.)

a level playing field for all economic actors?" and "When and how should governments regulate?"

Representatives from the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and North America within the UNECE region, and from Asia, Latin America and Africa are scheduled to make presentations

at the Forum. Speeches will also be made by a variety of organizations including national and regional regulatory authorities, consumer and business associations, and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the International Organization for Standardization. ❖

For more information visit <http://www.unece.org/trade/ct/welcome.htm>.

### Serbia and Montenegro: two distinct environmental performance reviews

In early 2006, the UNECE Environmental Performance Review team arranged a pre-mission to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, to take place at the end of May. The aim of this pre-mission was to embark, in collaboration with local authorities and international residents, on the second environmental performance review of the country.



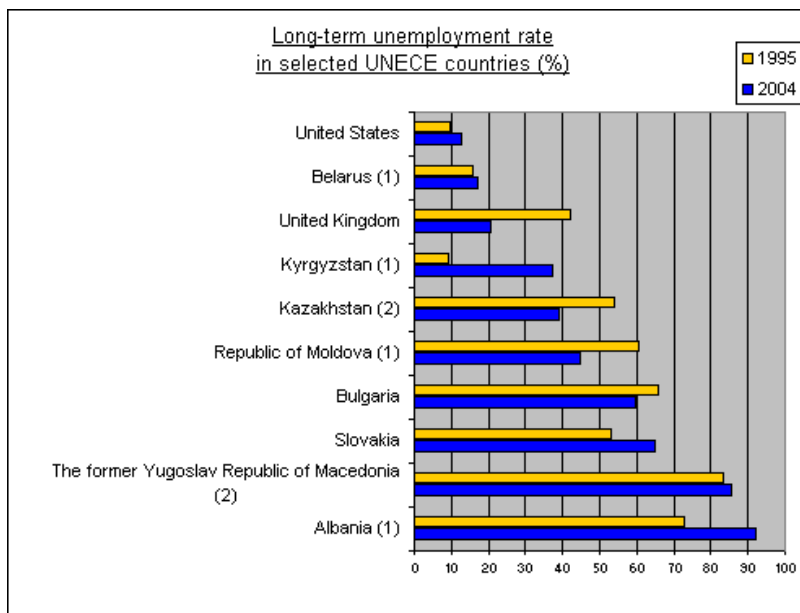
The UNECE team faces a conundrum

However, the results of the referendum held in Montenegro just before the pre-mission meant that instead of talking with the environmental authorities of two regions, the EPR team was welcomed by two countries and had to negotiate two separate projects. The EPR team was one of the first international guests that the now two distinct countries received.

The reports of the respective EPR will be published during the sixth Ministerial "Environment for Europe" Conference, to be held in 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia. ❖

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### Facts and figures How long do job seekers remain unemployed?



Source: UNECE Gender statistics database, compiled from national and international official sources.

Note: (1) registered unemployment; (2) 1995 data refer to 2000.

The long-term unemployment rate measures the percentage of unemployed persons seeking a job for more than one year among all job seekers. It is an indicator of the risk of social exclusion of this segment of the population. Along with the total unemployment rate, it also provides an insight into the capacity of labour markets to absorb the available workforce. The long-term unemployment rate varies considerably across the countries of the region. In 2004, 92.3% of the unemployed persons in Albania had been seeking a job for more than one year whereas in the United States, this proportion amounted to only 12.7%.