



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

Interregional Seminar on “Capacity-Building in Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business in the Mediterranean” (E-Med Business), 29-31 January 2003

UNECE, in partnership with the UN regional commissions for Africa (ECA) and Western Asia (ESCWA), the World Bank Group and a number of other international organizations held the launching Seminar for the E-Med Business project. The 30 participants included representatives of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Syrian Arab Republic (ESCWA region), Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (ECA region) and Israel, Malta and Turkey (UNECE region). Basic concepts on trade facilitation and e-business were examined, including public-private partnerships, as well as a number of political, technical and technological aspects. Participants recommended that regional trade facilitation (PRO) committees be set up in the ECA and ESCWA regions, along the lines of the SECIPRO, the trade facilitation committee under the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). This could lead to the setting up of an “interregional” MEDPRO committee. These new committees should significantly strengthen the eMed project, and ultimately contribute to the establishment of a free trade area in the Mediterranean region.

For further information contact the Project Coordinator, Jean E. Kubler, UNECE, jean.kubler@unece.org

New CD-ROM on “Best Practice for International Business” from the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development



This CD-ROM is intended to be an informative reference tool for a wide range of persons from both the private and the public sector, who have a particular interest in trade or in procedures for facilitating trade. It gives an overview of the activities, best practice recommendations, norms and standards drawn up by the UNECE Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development. It also presents analyses of commercial arbitration and trade practices. The menu comprises recommendations regarding: Trade promotion and trade finance; Trade facilitation recommendations and supporting documents; Enterprise development; International legal and commercial practice, and arbitration; Technical harmonization and standardization policy; and Agricultural standards.

Available from United Nations bookshops. Sales N° E.01-II.E.30, Price US\$ 150; or US\$ 50 to developing and transition countries.

New UNECE treaty to make the environment part of strategic decision-making

The new Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), finalized on 31 January in Geneva, provides for extensive public participation in government decision-making in numerous development sectors, from land-use planning to transport and from agriculture to industry, covering everything from oil refineries to ski-lifts. The public will not only have the right to know about plans and programmes, but also the right to have their comments taken into account, and be told of the final decisions and why they were taken. The participation of the public in strategic decision-making builds on the practice of the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The Protocol is expected to be formally adopted and signed at the forthcoming Ministerial ‘Environment for Europe’ Conference’ in Kiev, Ukraine, on 21-23 May 2003.

Not an official record - For information only

Natural gas vehicles (NGVs) in Europe closer to reality

During the recent week of ECE gas meetings, discussions were held on the "Blue Corridor" project initiated in 2000 by the Vernadsky Ecological Foundation, a Russian NGO, with the goal of establishing European NGVs transportation corridors and a network of gas refuelling stations.

The volume of international goods and passenger traffic is set to increase annually in line with the substantial development of transnational corporations and the fitting-out of vehicle fleets with modern tractor-trailer units and coaches designed for international travel. The environmental and economic advantages of gas in relation to other fuels augur well for its extensive use in various sectors of industry, agriculture, public utilities and transport. Road transport is a particularly promising area; with *inter alia* the opportunity to improve the eco-efficiency of transboundary traffic.

In early 2002, the UNECE Working Party on Gas and the Inland Transport Committee established a joint intersectoral Task Force to assess the economic and technical feasibility of this project. An expert Concept Report is currently being drafted for approval prior to an International Implementation Programme being developed.

Coming up soon ...

12 February	Team of Specialists on Industrial Restructuring
12 February	Team of Specialists on Entrepreneurship in Poverty Alleviation
12 February	Workshop on E-Regulations: E-Security and Knowledge Economy
12 February	Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development
13-14 February	Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development

Facts and figures:

GDP per capita in the ECE region, 2000				
	GDP per capita		GDP	Population
	US Dollars per capita (current PPPs)	Index (UNECE=100)	Share of total UNECE (per cent)	Share of total UNECE (per cent)
UNECE-50 ^a	20000	100	100	100
Eastern Europe-15	8400	42	5	11
CIS-12	5900	30	7	24
Russian Federation	7900	40	5	12
Western Europe-21 ^b	22200	111	43	39
European Union-15	24700	124	40	32
Euro area-12	24600	123	32	26
Europe excluding CIS-36	19100	96	48	50
Europe including CIS-48	14800	74	55	73
North America-2	34100	171	45	27
United States	34700	174	42	24

Source: UNECE Statistical Division

Notes: The regional aggregates are computed as the sum of countries current price values converted into US dollars using the purchasing power parity (PPP) of the year 2000.

^a Excludes Andorra, Israel, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino.

^b Includes Turkey.

Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is a price index that compares the price of a common, representative basket of goods and services in two different countries at the same point in time. Therefore, in addition to being spatial price indices, PPPs are also the rates of currency conversion that equalise the purchasing power of different currencies. PPPs differ from exchange rates, and are preferable for GDP per capita comparisons.

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