www.unece.org/forums/forum01/index.html

BACKGROUND

The dynamic development of the service sector is a high priority for all countries. The service sector is the key to promoting restructuring of industry and stimulating enterprises and entrepreneurship, especially in countries which are in transition to market economies.

Moreover, the development of services in the modern economy directly contributes directly to economic development and encourages employment creation. Recognizing the importance of these issues, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) has decided to hold an international forum on the implications of services development for trade, investment and enterprise and particularly in those services that can be delivered electronically.

To that end and as a continuation of the successful forum held last year, the UN/ECE will hold a two-day Forum on e-Services for Trade, Investment and Enterprise on 11 and 12 June 2001, immediately prior to the annual session of its Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

The Forum will be part of the UN/ECE's Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, which will consider the policy implications of the recommendations from the Forum at its meeting from 13 to 15 June and recommend a practical two-year United Nations initiative focused on recommendations for action by Governments and enterprises to promote trade in e-services within the region.

Speakers will include high-ranking officials from UN/ECE member States and key players in industry both at the regional and global level.

Further, in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC), a one-day practical workshop, offering modern techniques for successfully exporting services will be held in parallel on 12 June. International experts will offer useful strategies, case studies and advice to leading entrepreneurs and representatives of the region on all facets of services marketing and exporting.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Forum are to examine the service sector and its impact on the economies in the region:

estimate the impact of recent developments in the Internet and electronic commerce for e-enabled services in the region;
consider new ways of promoting service-sector business in the region, especially for SMEs;
identify the needs for capacity building in the region to enhance the service sector;
promote awareness of 'best practice' in the service sector, especially regarding electronic commerce for trade, investment, innovation and enterprise development;
assist in encouraging responsible and ethical business standards in the "new economy";
review the infrastructure and prospects for services in the countries of central and eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States;
assess the World Trade Organization requirements, including those of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

The Forum should also help define relevant elements for the future work programme of the Committee.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The Forum is targeted to the following four groups:

representatives and policy makers of Governments in the region;
leading entrepreneurs and representatives of service-sector enterprises;
potential investors in the service sector in the region;
representatives of international organizations, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations, and trade associations.

WHY ATTEND?

The expected benefits of the Forum are:

for policy makers, understanding the opportunities offered by the e-services sector and of the policy or regulatory issues implied; to comprehend the shift from industrial to service sectors, taking advantage of the level of education training and technological know-how in the region;
assisting them in defining the employment creation opportunities resulting from the growth of the services sector;
for leading entrepreneurs,to understand better how to enter trade in services and the opportunities offered in the transition economies market using the new technologies;
for potential investors, to learn how to get into these markets with least cost and managing the risks inherent in trade in e-services;
for international agencies and NGOs, to meet a cross-sector of entrepreneurs and representatives of service-sector business from throughout the region.

Participants will be able to meet with experts from all over the world and discuss these exciting market opportunities, become acquainted with the latest technological and regulatory developments, and gain insider knowledge from experts in the field.

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The Forum is expected to:

recommend a practical two-year United Nations initiative to promote trade in e-services in transition economies focused on preparing recommendations for action by Governments and enterprises;
provide distance-learning opportunities over the Internet to reduce the digital divide;
contribute to the commitment of Governments to develop a business dialog with the private sector;
endorse UN/ECE policy recommendations on best practices to stimulate the service sector.