



United Nations

UNECE Weekly

Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 332 — 24-28 August 2009

UNECE activities at World Water Week — Stockholm, 16-22 August

UNECE actively participated in the 2009 edition of the World Water Week, held in Stockholm from 16 - 22 August with a special focus on transboundary water management.

Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, was one of the speakers in the High Level Panel on Transboundary Waters. He stressed the importance of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) as a legal framework for transboundary water management, its support for implementation through projects and Guidance documents developed and the large experience accumulated in the past 13 years since the Convention's entry into force. He also called for further ratifications of the Convention and the amendment opening it beyond the region.

Some 60 participants attended a seminar on "How a legal framework is making a difference on the ground". The seminar, opened by Ján Kubiš and chaired by Heide Jekel, chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention, illustrated the practical usefulness of the Convention as a platform promoting action at different levels, from the development of strategic approaches for the whole UNECE region to concrete projects furthering cooperation in specific basins.

The importance of transboundary cooperation for peace and human well-being as well as the role of the Water Convention in this regard was highlighted by Uschi Eid, member of the German Parliament and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Sanitation (UNSGAB). Subsequent presentations covered current



activities under the Convention such as the 1st and 2nd Assessments of transboundary waters as well as the draft Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change which has a special focus on the transboundary context, presented by the Dutch Water Director, Renske Peters



Promoting innovation-based entrepreneurial opportunities in the UNECE region

International Conference, 28-29 September 2009



The current global financial and economic crisis has posed unprecedented challenges to policymakers, disrupted established partnerships and forced adaptive responses by the private sector. Despite the signs of an incipient stabilization, strong uncertainty remains regarding future development paths.

Fostering innovation is an essential dimension of any strategy to overcome existing difficulties while establishing solid foundations for dynamic economies capable of generating new engines of high and sustained growth. The importance of innovation policies has been amply recognized in many anti-crisis programmes around the world.

The International Conference "Promoting Innovation-based Entrepreneurial opportunities in the UNECE Region" aims to stimulate policy discussions and sharing of practical experiences and lessons learned among policymakers, government officials and representatives of business and academia on how innovation policies can contribute to foster economic dynamism and entrepreneurial opportunities in this challenging environment.

A radically changed financial landscape and growing pressures over public finances stress the importance of pursuing relevant and efficient public policies in support of innovation. International cooperation can facilitate transnational policy learning and promote collaboration and networking among innovation stakeholders.



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The second part of the Seminar focused on transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia. Challenges and possible solutions were discussed as well as the activities of the Water Convention in this subregion, such as the recently started programme linked to the Berlin Water Process. Saghit Ibatullin, the chairperson of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, highlighted the need for institutional reform and what was expected from the international community.

Finally, the Secretary to the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, Francesca Bernardini, presented the draft UNECE Guidance on water and adaptation to climate change, during the climate days at the World Water Week. The importance of this document was also underlined by several other speakers such as Tineke Huizinga, Vice Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management of The Netherlands.

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The Conference will consider the changing role of the public sector in the promotion of innovation, including the scope for new forms of collaboration with the private sector and the relation of innovation policies with other long-term concerns, such as sustainability.

A specific session will be devoted to the financing of innovation following the disruptions created by the crisis. In addition, the contribution of collaborative networks and open innovation models to flexibility and economic resilience will be separately examined, including their implications for intellectual property regimes.

Senior policymakers, top private sector leaders and distinguished academics from the UNECE region will speak at this unique conference, which is held as the substantive policy discussion segment of the fourth session of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, with the participation of all Teams of Specialists and networks of experts that support its work.

For a detailed programme, including the list of speakers, visit http://www.unece.org/ceci/documents/2009/session4/conf_ceci4.html

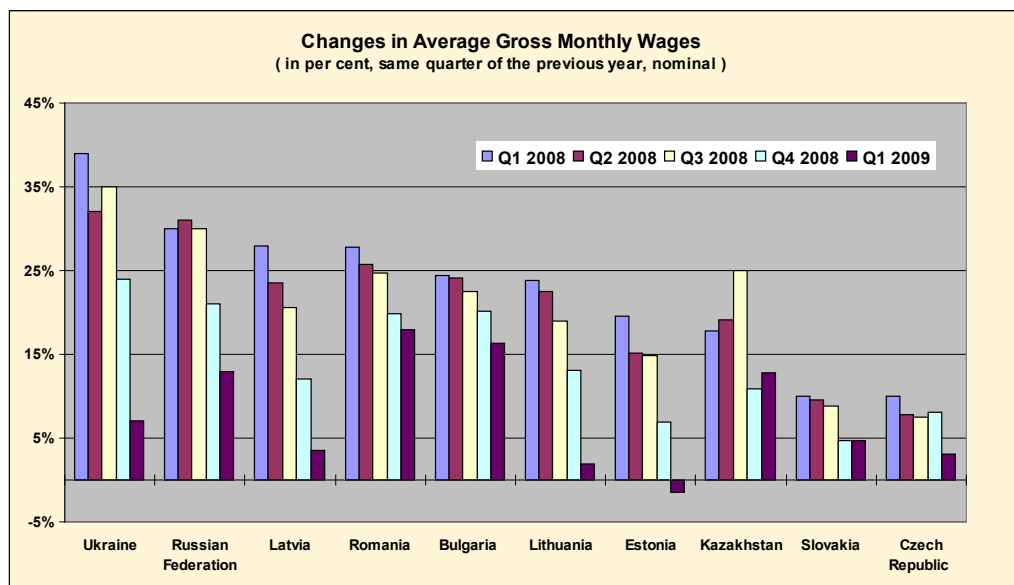
Facts and Figures

Wage growth slows down markedly in early 2009

The decline of economic activity in the UNECE region since the second half of 2008 (see UNECE Weekly Nos. 328 and 326) has been accompanied by a noticeable slowdown in the rise of nominal average gross monthly wages.

According to available data, wages continued to grow in many East European and CIS countries in the first quarter of 2009, but at a much slower pace than in the previous year. Estonia even reported a slight decrease in wages (in nominal terms for the first time since 1993). Very steep slowdown was recorded in Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia, with the year-on-year growth rates dropping from 40-25% in the first quarter of 2008 to 7-2% in the first three months of 2009.

Wage growth slowed markedly also in the Russian Federation — from some 30% year-on-year during the first three quarters of 2008 to 13% in January-March 2009. In the rest of the countries depicted in the chart, the drop in the pace of wage increase was less dramatic, with Romania, Bulgaria and Kazakhstan continuing to record double digit rates of wage increase in nominal terms. However, if the economic recession is prolonged, the wage growth will most likely decelerate further.



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