



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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Bulgaria joins ADN Agreement

Bulgaria has ratified the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN), bringing the total number of Contracting States to five, namely: Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Netherlands and Russian Federation. The ADN Agreement will enter into force once two more States have deposited their instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.



Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR), the ADN consists of a main legal text and an Annex. The Annex contains the technical requirements for the inter-national carriage of dangerous substances and articles in packages and in bulk on board inland navigation vessels and tank vessels, as well as uniform

provisions concerning the construction and operation of such vessels. They also establish international requirements and procedures for inspections, issue of certificates of approval, recognition of classification societies, monitoring, and training and examination of experts.

Pending the entry into force of the ADN, the annexed regulations are updated on a regular basis at a Joint UNECE/CCNR Meeting of Experts for recommended application through national legislation.*

For more information, see <http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/danger.htm> or contact olivier.kervella@unece.org

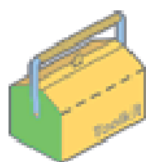
The ADN aims at increasing the safety of the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways and at preventing any pollution resulting from accidents or incidents during the carriage, while facilitating international transport and trade of such goods.

About the ADN Agreement

Adopted on 25 May 2000 in Geneva at a Diplomatic Conference organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the

Trade Facilitation Toolkit & Forms Repository

For international trade to flow smoothly and efficiently, importers and exporters need to have easy access to the required trade documents and forms and to be familiar with the procedures for submitting them. Aligning trade documents with international standards has now become a prerequisite for accessing international markets. Standardizing the documents is the first step towards document automation and electronic business.



Most trade documents used by advanced trading countries are aligned with the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents. In this, however, developing countries and countries in transition still need to align and simplify their trade forms.

For traders, locating the forms required to trade with a specific country or obtaining correct information on the necessary procedures can be difficult.

The United Nations Trade Facilitation Toolkit and Forms Repository (<http://unece.unog.ch/etrade>) are designed to address such problems. They assist Governments and trade associations to simplify their documentary requirements and develop consistent national series of trade documents. Traders can download international trade documents, enter data and print and email the completed document

The project was developed jointly by the five regional commissions of the United Nations.*

Consumers' fear and paranoia

Question of the week



to Kaj Barlund, Director of the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division

What does the bird flu teach us about transparency?

Scientists fear the H5N1 virus could mutate to pass from human to human and spark a human flu pandemic. So far, the only human victims have been directly infected by sick birds. Despite the reassurance of public authorities, fear and misunderstanding about the H5N1 virus affecting poultry worldwide has led many consumers to believe that they will catch this virus by eating chicken.

Fear and paranoia

Fear and paranoia often take hold when a disease threatens to become an epidemic. Public confidence in information about the virus provided by international organizations and governments will play a significant role in how the public reacts to measures to prevent a pandemic. A crucial aspect is the governments' record on transparency. If the public has reason to believe, based on a government's past record, that transparency is not a high priority, then reactions based on rumours and hearsay may lead to over-reaction by members of the public.

Right to know

Here the Right to Know principle guaranteed by the UNECE Aarhus Convention* comes into the picture. Secure access to information is a means of strengthening trust between citizens and their government. Where trust between citizens and public authorities is lacking, the ability of the public to act on information provided by government suffers. The consequences of the breakdown of trust between citizens and public authority can be quite serious.



↓ Question of the week (cont.)

The Right to Know in the context of the Convention implies the right of the people to easily access information on all matters linked to the environment. This includes the state of the environment, factors affecting the environment such as toxic substances, planned activities that might have an impact on the environment such as construction in sensitive natural areas, and the state of human health and safety as affected by the environment.

For their part, governments must make a more consistent effort to keep the public informed of the environmental situation – whether the condition of the environment is good or bad, secure or threatening. When both positive and negative information is available, it becomes easier for each person to decide upon a course of action, to protect their environment and their health.

Trust between citizens and public authorities

By providing the public with correct and timely information, the government promotes the needed level of trust between citizens and public authorities. Should information be urgently required, if, for example it would allow the public to avoid harm caused by an environmental threat, then the information should and must be disseminated immediately in the broadest manner possible by the governments and companies implicated. Governmental agencies such as Ministries should have the appropriate data, and must answer any request made by the public, as long as it is a reasonable one.

Often in crises like the bird flu case economic, health and environmental aspects are intertwined. It is therefore even more important that the citizens can trust the pronouncements made by their officials. The Aarhus Convention provides an important international example of how to deal with the complex issue of transparency and democratic accountability in matters related to the environment. ✨

For more information contact public.participation@unece.org

A more extensive video interview on this topic can be seen at <http://www.unece.org/videooc/videooc.html>

Aarhus Convention

The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) which was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2001, is not only an environmental agreement, it is also a Convention about government accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

The Aarhus Convention grants the public rights and imposes on Parties and public authorities obligations regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice.

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Off the press

Trends in child/parent relationships

The recent changes in family patterns and behaviour are posing a variety of challenges to industrialized nations. These must be acknowledged and tackled by society at large, and by state institutions in particular. The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) was launched in 2000 to respond to policymakers' need to have available relevant information on family change and family behaviour. The main substantive goal of the (GGP) is to improve understanding of the factors that influence demographic development, with a particular attention towards relationships between children and parents (generations) and relationships between partners (gender).



In each participating country, the Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS) is the main data-collection activity in the Programme, supplemented by the GGP Contextual Database. The GGS is a panel survey of a nationally representative sample of 18-79 year-old resident population in each participating country with at least three panel waves and an interval of three years between each wave. The contextual databases are designed to complement micro-level survey data with macro-level information on policies and aggregate indicators. This publication includes four methodological documents of the GCS. ✨

Available from the UN Publications Sales and Marketing Section, Palais des Nations, Geneva, e-mail unpubli@unog.ch.

Coming up ...

20-22 March

Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

23 March

International Festival of Road Safety Films

20-23 March

Joint Meeting of the RID Safety Committee and the ECE Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (Bern, Switzerland)

20-22 March

Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes



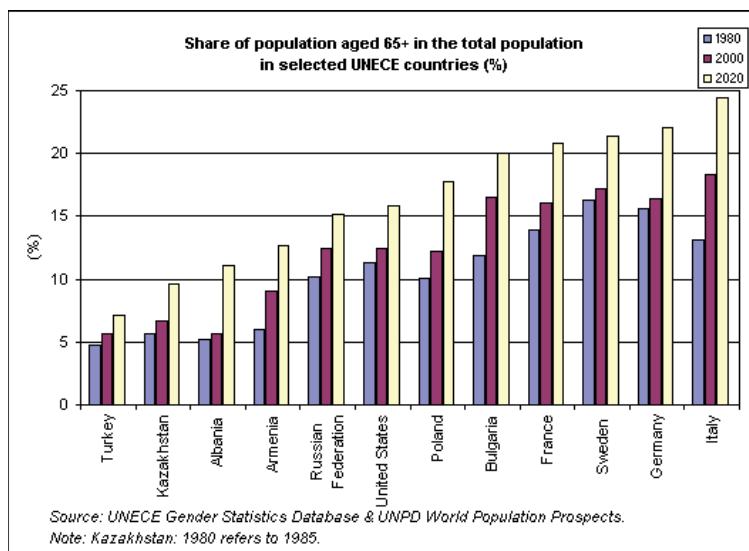
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Facts and figures

Population ageing will speed up in the next decades



The share of population aged 65+ is increasing in all UNECE countries due to the combined effects of declining fertility and increasing life span. Population ageing is evolving at different paces and the current situation presents varied stages. In 2000 the proportion of elderly ranged between 3.7% and 18.3%. Projections suggest that during the period 2000-2020, the size of the elderly population will grow at a faster pace than during the preceding two decades.