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Microcredit for women entrepreneurs in the SPECA region

Representatives of state institutions responsible for SME development, women's business associations (WBAs), academic institutions, and the private sector from SPECA member countries participated in the International Workshop



on Microcredit and Other Support Systems for Women Entrepreneurs (Haifa, Israel, 3-10 April). They represented authorities at central level, such as Ministry of Economic Development (Azerbaijan), local level, such as district administrations from Naryn (Kyrgyzstan) and Ferghana (Uzbekistan), national WBAs (Georgia), as well as women entrepreneurs.

The workshop was supported by the Government of Israel (Centre for International Cooperation-MASHAV) and organized in cooperation with the UNECE by the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC).

The training course, delivered in Russian, covered national and regional policies of financial support for small businesses, micro-credit schemes, marketing strategies for small businesses, and networking. The course also included "hands on" experience and study visits to

institutions supporting SME development and individual micro enterprises. Among training materials the participants received the Russian version of the UNECE publication Access to Financing and ICT for Women Entrepreneurs.

"I am extremely pleased with the knowledge and contacts gained during the training programme", commented Alma Doshanova, Director of the Institute of Economy and Finance of Kostanay State University (Kazakhstan). Upon completion of the workshop it was agreed to further discuss the possibilities of establishing a regional network of women entrepreneurs to strengthen existing networks and to exchange good practices in the SPECA region.

The workshop is the first project implemented under the new SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy (supported by UNECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), which aims at mainstreaming gender into economic policies and regional cooperation in Central Asia, raising awareness and promoting exchange of experiences, strengthening networks, and capacity-building. The second seminar on ICT for Women Entrepreneurs will be held on 16-26 October. It will be also supported by the Government of Israel and implemented by the MCTC in cooperation with UNECE.

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Reviewing National Accounts

The international set of economic accounts – System of National Accounts 1993 (SNA 93) – is under review. The ever increasing globalisation of the world's economies, the development of communication and technologies, the existing informal sector, the appearance of complex financial instruments and the measurement of financial and capital services set new challenges for national accountants.



A number of task forces and expert groups have been working over the last two years to propose a revised set of recommendations for updating the SNA 93. A joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on National Accounts to be held at the Palais des Nations on 25-28 April is the first one where all the decisions and recommendations will be brought together in a consolidated way and presented to the countries for global discussion. Delegates from 51 countries and 12 international organisations have so far registered.

One full day will be dedicated to a seminar on globalisation and its effect on national accounts. The Meeting will also include sessions on national accounts and employment data; regional aspects; long time series when major changes occur; and the non-observed economy.

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Reviewing the Gothenburg Protocol



Last week the Heads of Delegation to the Working Group on Strategies and Review of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution met in Geneva to discuss plans for reviewing the Convention's Gothenburg Protocol that entered into force last year.

It was clear from the discussions that the science on which the Protocol was based and the concerns of governments about air pollution had changed

since the Protocol was adopted in 1999. The review, which is required under the terms of the Protocol, will be an important step towards considering further action on air pollution in the future. Issues such as particulate matter, hemispheric transport of air pollution and possible links with climate change were not included in the work leading up to adoption of the Gothenburg Protocol; many Parties now feel that these issues should be included in the scope of any future instrument.





Parties elaborated on the problems they had in implementing the Protocol – in some instances this was preventing ratification. The review process would need to consider how to highlight these problems so that what some might see as past mistakes could be avoided in any future protocol.

The review should be completed by December 2007.

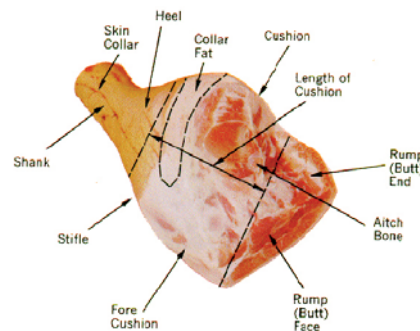
The Working Group also discussed progress in the Convention's EECCA* action plan. Delegates from EECCA countries indicated that their countries were making good progress towards accession to protocols, reporting of emissions to air and in setting up atmospheric monitoring stations. They highlighted the important support that was being provided by other Parties, either directly bilaterally or through the Convention's Trust Fund. However, there were a number of areas where support was still required, such as the methodology for constructing emission inventories.

* Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

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Meat standards

Traditionally, meat cuts and names have varied from country to country, which not only causes confusion, but can also create unnecessary trade barriers. Standardisation of the trading language allows the meat industry to adopt modern data transfer methods and to streamline the flow of information and product throughout the supply chain.



The UNECE Specialized Section for Standardization of Meat held its 15th session in Australia (19-24 April) during Brisbane's 2006 World Meat Congress week.

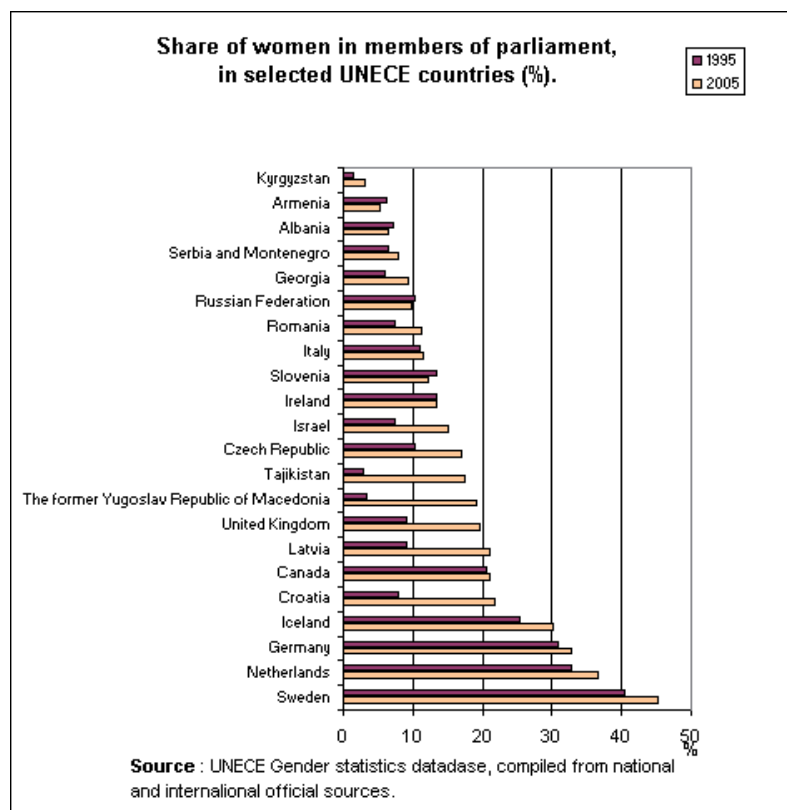
The UNECE has for over 50 years developed internationally

harmonized commercial quality standards for perishable produce designed to facilitate international trade and create market transparency for buyers and consumers.

A new standard for ovine meat was to be approved during the session. Both Australia and New Zealand were acknowledged for their special contribution to the development of the standard. Separate standards for goatmeat, pork, veal, livestock and offal are either under way, or in preliminary discussion phase. ❖

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Facts and figures



Note: For the following countries, data in 1995 refer to another year. Slovenia [1992], Germany [1994], Israel, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [1996], Canada [1997].

Definition: Data refer to the lower or single house. Data reflect results of the most recent election.

Progress is slowly being made to involve more women in public life and decision-making processes. In most countries of the UNECE region, the share of women in national parliaments has increased over the last 10 years.

However, women's participation in political life is still very low: the percentage of women in national parliaments is below 20% in most countries, while only a few of them have reached the level of 30%.

Coming up ...

24-28 April
Working Party on General Safety Provisions

25-28 April
Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on National Accounts

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