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HELSINKI CONFERENCE UNDERLINES THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION-BASED COMPETITIVENESS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

"Science, technology and innovation increasingly determine economic performance, the new employment opportunities and the competitiveness of industries and nations. Innovation is thus a major source of competitive advantage including during periods of dramatic change as in the current global economy", stated Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, in his opening statement to the International Conference on Policies to Address Financing and

Entrepreneurial Challenges in High-growth Innovative Firms, which took place in Helsinki on 2-4 June 2010.

The Conference, which was organised by UNECE jointly with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, brought together policy-makers, practitioners and academics from UNECE member States, including from many transition economies from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Participants discussed how innovation and entrepreneurship policies can promote faster post-crisis recovery, what are the most effective forms of public-private cooperation in these areas and what are the good practices in public programmes promoting the financing of innovative firms, among many other issues.

Finland is a prominent example of a country that has successfully adopted innovation policies to foster competitiveness and adapt to structural changes in the world economy. As Erkki Virtanen, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, mentioned in his welcoming statement, "it is not a single policy area which makes the economy innovative but it is a complex, interactive system" that requires the attention of policy-makers. □

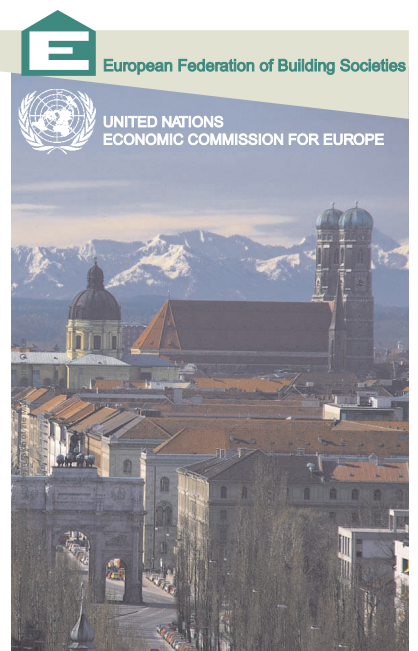
All presentations made at the Conference will be found at:
http://www.unece.org/ceci/ppt_presentations/2010/ic/Helsinki/conf_icp.html

HOUSING FINANCE BEYOND SUBPRIME

More than 130 participants from 17 countries attended the International Congress on "Housing finance beyond subprime", jointly organized by UNECE and the European Federation of Building societies held in Munich (Germany) from 17 to 19 May 2010. Participants evaluated the effects of the financial crises on the national housing markets and discussed institutional reforms that could reduce the volatility of financial markets.

Expert speakers analyzed the impact of the financial crisis on the housing sector, the consequences for the welfare of households and ways to increase consumers' confidence in the UNECE region. They also agreed that all financing systems share the need for stable economic conditions and for a legal and fiscal environment conducive to an efficient allocation of capital. To achieve stability, one prerequisite is to set up a modern system of supervision of the banking sector. Other important areas to promote policy change include improved risk assessment of investments, the regulation of commercial and mortgage loan institutions, transparent and fair taxation systems, environmental sustainability of the housing sector as well as the promotion of micro-finance to assist low-income groups of population.

In the conclusions, speakers agreed that more attention was needed not only on the implementation of regulation for financial markets but also on setting up better capital allocation risk models, increased transparency in access to information for consumers, certification for energy efficiency in buildings, and achieving a more balanced distribution of housing loans between refurbishing of existing housing stock and the building of new dwellings. Principles of good governance were deemed to be a major component of sound international finance and were seen as essential to the stability and integrity of financial systems. □



For more information, please visit
<http://eubv2010.com/index.php?id=173&L=1>

EUROPE'S FORESTS ARE EXPANDING, BUT HAS THE PUBLIC NOTICED?



There are a number of public misperceptions about forests in the pan-European region. According to national and regional surveys, it is common belief that forests are disappearing

and using wood is a threat to forest health. But the opposite is in fact the case.

Forests now cover more than 44 per cent of Europe's land area. And in the last 15 years, the pan-European forests grew by 17 million hectares. This is equivalent to the area of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia combined.

"People are reluctant to use more wood because they think this contributes to deforestation and environmental degradation. But Europe's forests are healthy and the public need to be encouraged to use more wood and wood products", says Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, Chairman of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network. "In forests that are sustainably managed, more trees grow every year than are harvested".

The UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network is mobilizing its participants to become proactive and dispel widespread public misconceptions about forests in Europe. The Network consists of a group of experts from member States in the UNECE region. It met recently in Gothenburg, Sweden, to develop a pan-European strategy for forest communication, and share plans and experiences concerning national public-awareness campaigns.

"To make sure that forest issues are properly understood by governments and the general public, we are going to have to be very creative and use all possible channels of communication", said Mr. Gschwandtl. "We already know how wood benefits the environment. In addition, to produce wood requires less energy and emits less carbon dioxide than to produce most other construction materials. So, if we can convince people to use wood instead of concrete, plastic or steel, this is going to reduce long-term emissions of carbon dioxide, which is a major greenhouse gas."

2011 will be the International Year of the Forest. It will represent a unique opportunity for the Network to get the right message across to the European public. □

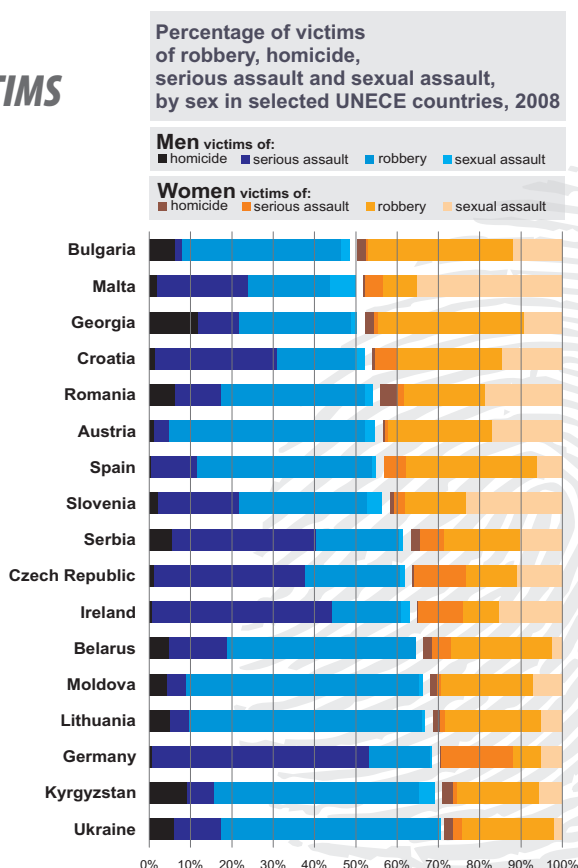
For more information on the Forest Communicators Network, please visit: <http://timber.unece.org/index.php?id=95> or contact Eve Charles at: eve.charles@unece.org.

FACTS AND FIGURES

MEN ARE MORE OFTEN VICTIMS OF CRIME THAN WOMEN

According to available data, the proportion of males among crime victims is generally higher than 50 per cent. In some countries, men account for more than two thirds of crime victims (in 6 out of 17 countries presented in the chart). However, the difference in share of male-victims versus female-victims varies starkly between the categories of crime.

The share of men is particularly high among victims of serious assaults (from 68 per cent in Spain to 92 per cent in Georgia). Men are also more often victims of homicide, where their share ranges from 61 per cent in Romania to 83 per cent in Malta.



In the majority of countries they are more likely than women to be victims of robbery as well. On the other hand, in most countries, more than 85 per cent of victims of sexual assaults are women.

To improve the quality and comparability of crime data between countries UNECE recently published together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime a manual on Victimization Surveys that is meant to serve as an international methodological guideline. □

The Manual is available at: http://www.unece.org/publications/oes/STATS_Manual_Victimization_surveys_E.pdf.

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