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## **The Information Society in Europe and North America: Contributions from UNECE<sup>1</sup> to the WSIS PrepCom-2**

### **Executive Summary**

- The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) will take place in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, and is one of the major forthcoming events for the United Nations (UN). The UNECE being a regional arm of the UN has been fully involved in the process. This document provides an overview of the regional process in Europe and North America preparing the WSIS. The UNECE cooperated closely with the Romanian authorities in organising the Bucharest Conference, which adopted a set of principles and priorities for the Information Society.
- The UNECE continues to support this process through a range of activities, described in the document.
- Further, the UNECE has supported the WSIS process through the regional nodes of the UN ICT Task Force, which brings together

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<sup>1</sup> The UNECE is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations. Its primary goal is to encourage greater economic cooperation among its member States (Western and Eastern Europe, United States and Canada, Israel).

UNECE focuses on economic analysis, environment and human settlements, statistics, sustainable energy, trade, industry and enterprise development, timber and transport. Its activities include policy analysis, development of conventions, standards and policy recommendations, and technical assistance.

For further information regarding the UNECE ICT/WSIS related activities and programmes, please contact: Mr. Hans Hansell, Deputy Director and Chief Global Trade Solution Branch, Trade Development and Timber division.

Tel + 41 22 917 24 57

Email [hans.hansell@unece.org](mailto:hans.hansell@unece.org)

stakeholders from throughout the region. A Regional network and a Website, [WWW.unece.org/etrades/ict/](http://WWW.unece.org/etrades/ict/), support the Task force, and its Geneva node.

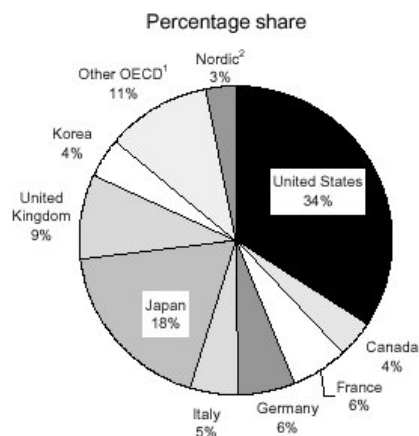
- The UNECE also contributes to the WSIS process by mainstreaming the WSIS main themes into its current work.
- The UNECE would welcome comments and suggestions, particularly concerning proposals and initiatives, as its aim is to stimulate discussions and promote concrete outcomes in cooperation with member states and all other stakeholders in the region.

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## ***Did you know that...***

- ❑ Estonia Internet host penetration is the highest amongst Baltic, Central and Eastern European Countries<sup>2</sup>.
- ❑ 90% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 now use computers in the United States and the rate of growth of Internet use is currently two million new users per month<sup>3</sup>.
- ❑ Information technology is a formidable tool to achieve sustainable development as it produces huge environmental benefits through use of video conferencing and email. However, experts estimate that only in Canada 351 million computers will become obsolete by 2004<sup>4</sup>.
- ❑ Intelligent transport systems promise safer roads and lower emissions.
- ❑ Only a third of the EU countries workforce has ever had computer training for professional use, whereas half of this workforce uses computers at their workplace<sup>5</sup>.
- ❑ The Hungarian Government has created a consortium of public and private actors to help provide PCs and Internet at a discounted rate to 1,400 underprivileged families. The programme began in September 2000 and is funded by Compaq, Matav and Postabank<sup>6</sup>.
- ❑ Only 37 % of small companies in September 2002 declared plans to buy either an office computer or a laptop within the next 12 months<sup>7</sup>.
- ❑ Spain plans to increase the present 5 % hotels rate using the Internet, to 75% by 2005<sup>8</sup>.

**Employment in the ICT sector, selected OECD countries, 2000**



1. "Other OECD": Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal.  
2. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.  
Source: OECD estimates, based on national sources; STAN and National Accounts databases, August 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/e21102.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2002/TECH/internet/02/06/internet.use/>

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.web.apc.org>

<sup>5</sup> Source: <http://www.strategic.gr/publications/knowledgehub/selectedsurveys/B/B45.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/cs/hungary/material/hungary.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.europemedia.net/>

<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://www.europemedia.net/>

## **1. From Bucharest to Geneva, Tunis and Beyond: a Continuing Process and a Growing Momentum**

2003 is the year of the Geneva session of the WSIS. Work at the UNECE has focused on the follow up to the *Bucharest Pan-European Regional Conference*, held in November 2002, and on preparations for the December Summit. The Bucharest Conference has provided substantive inputs to the WSIS preparatory process. The UNECE played a key role in the preparation for Bucharest and continues to support the preparation for the WSIS in Geneva and Tunis, both in terms of intergovernmental processes and substantive contributions.

### **1.1 The Outcome of the Bucharest Pan European Regional Ministerial Conference**

In preparation for the WSIS, the Romanian Government in cooperation with the UNECE and the WSIS Executive Secretariat organized the Conference, held in Bucharest on 7-9 November 2002. Over 1000 participants attended the Conference from Governments, international organizations, business and civil society. Many UNECE member countries participated at the Ministerial level. The discussion was lively and widely reported in the media.

- The Conference adopted a Policy Declaration that identifies and clearly spells out the fundamental principles of the information society, providing an effective framework for formulating monitoring and evaluating the plans of action, initiatives and partnerships required for the achievement of concrete goals and targets. The Conference also produced a report containing the many and interesting ideas that were discussed and the experience of best practice presented in Bucharest.

- The Conference was preceded by an intense period of work under the leadership of the Romanian authorities. Sub-regional meetings were held providing substantive inputs to the Bucharest Conference and its follow up in preparation for WSIS. In particular, the *Bishkek Stakeholder Conference on the Information Society for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Region* in Kyrgyzstan in September and its second phase in Moscow, in October, reviewed major challenges facing the information society and discussed new regional initiatives. The Bishkek and Moscow Conferences produced a resolution on the information society that representing an input to the WSIS preparatory process.

- In addition, the *Telecommunication for Development* Conference in Belgrade, in October, formulated a set of proposals for action and agreed a joint ICT policy agenda for six Southeast European countries.

### **1.2 The UNECE contribution to the Bucharest process.**

The UNECE cooperated closely with the Romanian authorities in preparing the Bucharest Conference. In particular, UNECE prepared a first draft of the set of "Principles" for the Information Society. These Principles laid down the basis for an intergovernmental process led by the Romanian authorities that produced the substantive political declaration adopted in Bucharest. Other organizations like ITU, UNDP and the European Commission, and several stakeholders from civil society and business, took active part in the process. The Bucharest Declaration, jointly with the Bamako Declaration, adopted at the *African regional preparatory Conference*, and the other policy statements produced by the regional meetings, are expected to provide

major inputs to the WSIS process.

The UNECE organized three events that were important parts of the Bucharest Conference. First, a parallel event on *Building a Gender Sensitive Information Society*, which was quoted as best practice in including a gender perspective into the WSIS process; second, the UNECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development organised a thematic workshop on *E-policy and E-Regulations*; and third, the UNECE contributed, in cooperation with ISO, IEC and ITU, to organizing a section in the workshop on *Defining the Information Society*. All three events were well attended and appreciated by participants.

### **1.3 PrepCom-2: the Challenges of the WSIS Process**

The outcome of the Bucharest Conference marks an important step in the WSIS process. The many ideas and suggestions developed at the Bucharest meeting gave way to a policy dialogue, which is expected to contribute significantly to the preparations for WSIS. Other regional preparatory meetings were held in the Asian and Latin American regions (*WSIS Asian Regional Conference* 13-15 January, Tokyo, *ESCWA Regional Conference* Beirut, Lebanon, 2-4 February for the *East Asian Region*, and the *Latin American Regional Conference* in Bávaro, Dominican Republic, from 29 to 31 January 2003).

The *Second Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-2)* takes place in Geneva on 17-28 February 2003. The main objective of the meeting is to begin considering a draft Declaration of Principles and Action Plan, to be submitted for the approval of Heads of State attending the Summit in December 2003. The regional inputs should be carefully considered at the PrepCom-2. In particular, the Bucharest Declaration should provide a basis for the Declaration to be adopted at the Summit. UNECE is playing a coordinating role vis-à-vis the other regional commissions in the provision of inputs to the WSIS process.

The preparation for the WSIS is proving to be particularly complex and controversial for a series of reasons: - the nature of the topic spans not only many issues of technological development but also the political questions of rights, freedoms and the issues of security; - dialogue over e-strategies brings together worlds that speak different languages and are not used to engage in systematic dialogue; - this is a field where Governments cannot proceed alone, but have to involve business and civil society; - it is difficult to regulate technical change through legal instruments and formal action plans; - etc.

We should add to these difficulties the fact that there is a growing sense of fatigue with global Conferences and processes, and that there is no global architecture for international dialogue on the information society.

### **1.4 The Regional Ways to WSIS: the comparative advantage of the regional approach**

The recognised success of the inputs of the regional commissions into the WSIS can be explained in relation to the above-mentioned difficulties and the corresponding comparative advantages of the UNECE and other regional commissions. In fact,

- a. UNECE is an organisation of policy analysis with a strong technical background, and at the same time it is policy oriented: it is well placed

- therefore to play a bridging role between the technical dimensions of the Information Society and the policy or political ones;
- b. The regional level is proving to be a very appropriate one for assisting member countries in their national efforts for self-assessment, e-strategy and capacity building. It is also an appropriate level for monitoring developments, exchanging experience and identifying best practise;
  - c. UNECE has a broad mandate in economic and social development, and can therefore promote a cross-sectoral and integrated approach to the many different aspects of IS policies, ranging from environment to transport and trade.

Further, UNECE's comparative advantage lies in linking ICT know-how with its sectoral activities. In this context evidence can be found for instance in the Aarhus convention, the development and implementation of electronic business standards, the Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development, etc. Linking national strategies with sectoral ICT developments provides a concrete contribution to promoting development and bridging the digital divide. In addition, it can help in defining targeted and focused technical assistance programmes.

### **1.5 The Ministerial track in the WSIS process**

The Bucharest Conference has shown how important it is to have the direct and personal involvement of Ministers in the preparation of the Summit. Particularly promising has been the creation in Bucharest of a Bureau of Vice-Presidents, bringing together Ministers that not only have a key institutional position in the process (for instance the Danish Minister, holding the EU Presidency in 2002, the Italian Minister, which will hold the EU Presidency at the time of the Geneva Summit, the Russian and the Kyrgyz Ministers, and obviously the Romanian Minister, who chaired the Bucharest Ministerial meeting), but also a specific competence and a direct political interest.

Opportunities should be provided and appropriate fora established for keeping the Ministers of the UNECE region directly engaged in the WSIS process. The direct and personal interest of the Romanian President has also been considered an important outcome of Bucharest. Consideration must be given to establishing a Ministerial track in the WSIS process, so that the political momentum can be maintained, and the highest-level political interest for the summit can be stimulated as early in the process as possible.

In order to increase awareness and sensitise decision makers to the policy dimensions of ICT, the UNECE and other regional commissions should continue to use their position as a platform for attracting and maintaining political interest, and promoting events linked to the WSIS process.

### **1.6 Integrated Action Frameworks and Concrete Commitments**

A key challenge of the post Bucharest process is in translating the principles and priorities adopted in Bucharest into concrete commitments and action plans.

The UNECE has developed a conceptual framework for presenting in an integrated way the activities related to ICT policies. This framework is now being used within

the UNECE to maintain the information society principles linked to the sectoral activities, strengthen synergy and coordination among the several relevant fields of work carried out on the basis of current mandates. The integrated framework combines in a matrix format, the 7 principles and 5 main themes adopted by member states in Bucharest.

The integrated action framework can be a useful tool also for Member States wishing to plan and coordinate their activities in the ICT areas, and for international agencies engaged in the promotion and coordination of international activities in this field.

The UNECE has promoted a strategic framework for the development of national ICT strategies, and is now experimenting such a framework to support the formulation of **national ICT strategy plans in transition countries**. E-strategy assessment country reports have already been produced and tested. This exercise aims at developing experience for setting the policy dialogue on e-strategies on firm grounds in the preparation and follow-up of WSIS.

### **1.7 The UN ICT Task Force and its regional nodes**

As a contribution to the activities of the UN ICT Task Force, on April 2002, the UNECE launched the European and Central Asian Regional Nodes of the UN ICT Task Force, with the purpose of bringing together different stakeholders and contributing to the WSIS. Stakeholders from throughout the region participate in these regional nodes, many coming from civil society, research and education organisations as well from the business community.

A website for the Geneva Node of the UN ICT Task Force has been activated with a view to making available information on the relevant activities in this field in the region, and providing links to the UN ICT Task Force, the Moscow Node, the UN Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) and the European database on Public Administration and e-government.

More information can be found at the website address:

<http://www.unece.org/etrades/ict/>

### **1.8 Mainstreaming the ICT dimension in UNECE's current work**

The preparation for Bucharest and the WSIS has provided an occasion to better link together and place in a consistent framework the considerable amount of work that UNECE carries out in the field of ICT-related policy areas on the basis of current mandates. An internal Task Force, i.e. the Information Society Team (IST), has been set up, led by the Deputy Executive Secretary, to share information and coordinate across the different sectors the various activities. The IST has been a significant player in providing input and support to WSIS.

The UNECE continues to mainstream the WSIS main themes into its current work. A few specific events, organized by UNECE, or in cooperation with UNECE, are being planned to take place in Geneva in the context of WSIS. These include: - an event proposed by the UNECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development (TSIED); - a round table jointly organized by UNECE and UNCTAD on "Overcoming Obstacles to the Development of the Information Society: Business Solutions"; - an event jointly organized with the ITU Working Group on Gender and ICT and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on gender

issues; and - a joint ISO/IEC/ITU and UNECE event dealing with the role of open standards in the information society.

### **1.9 Towards an UNECE regional strategy for information society policies**

The process towards WSIS will draw attention to the requirements and the possible features of a regional ICT strategy, based on the principles and priority themes adopted by member governments in Bucharest. Time will show the role and comparative advantage of the UNECE in relation to the other main players in the region for the specification and implementation of such a strategy.

UNECE has considerable experience in setting **norms and standards** relevant to ICT policies. These activities are continuously adjusted and refocused to reflect evolving member countries priorities. They increasingly include the development of **policy guidelines, the identification of best practice, and the cross-country comparison** of what works and does not work in ICT policies.

In addition, coordination efforts among the different PSBs (Intergovernmental bodies) of the ECE have been promoted to establish an integrated approach to policy and a consistent programme in the field of ICT, but also to ensure that UNECE can effectively cooperate with the other regional commissions and the whole UN system, in particular through cooperation with ITU, the WSIS secretariat and the ICT Task Force. Capacity building programmes with particular emphasis on transition economies have also been considered.

The main tasks required of UNECE in this context are:

- a) Streamline and refocus ICT aspects in the different sectors and PSBs (Intergovernmental bodies);
- b) Consolidate a cross-sectoral ICT approach, through appropriate mechanisms;
- c) Define targeted and focused technical assistance programmes;
- d) Consolidate and extend partnership arrangements with other organizations, business and civil society.

### **1.10 Ongoing Initiatives**

UNECE is carrying out several activities on the basis of current mandates and activities in its programme of work. These activities contribute in various ways to the follow up to Bucharest and preparation for WSIS. These initiatives will be presented under three main headings:

1. The ICT dimension in UNECE's current work
2. UNECE's cross-sectoral and coordination aspects
3. Support to UN-wide processes
4. Knowledge Economy Reports (in collaboration with other regional commissions)

## **2. The ICT Dimension in the UNECE's current work**

### **2.1 Industrial Restructuring, Energy and Enterprise Development**

Within the programme of work on Industrial Restructuring, Energy and Enterprise Development, the UNECE is assisting member States, and in particular those with economies in transition, in two key areas or subprogrammes in relation to the WSIS process, notably:

- (i) the emerging knowledge-based economy, and
- (ii) the digital economy development.

The overarching objective of these subprogrammes is to provide technical assistance and regulatory policy advice to the transition economies in order to help them develop strategies based on intellectual know how and new technological systems and, thereby, facilitating their use as a development tool.

The work on the emerging knowledge-based economy involves providing information and contributing to raising awareness of member States and transitional economies on the fact that the new economy is increasingly dependent on the input of intellectual capital and innovation. The major goal of this initiative is to stimulate the exchange of national experiences, to identify best practices and to promote region-wide and global cooperation of member States, with a special focus on the countries in transition and the emerging market economies. Assessments are carried out of the progress of countries in establishing the policy foundations for managing the evolution of the knowledge-based economy, and its implications for society at large. On the basis of these assessments, the subprogramme facilitates the identification of gaps in the material infrastructure, information systems and regulatory framework for innovation and the dissemination of new technologies.

In the digital economy development subprogramme, the work is focussed on assisting member States in creating an enabling environment for the development of an information knowledge-based economy. The underlying goals are to assist member States, in particular countries with emerging economies and economies in transition, to effectively utilize information and communication technologies, to reap the economic dividends/benefits accruing from their use, to bring about an improved understanding of the new technology-related processes and policies, to assess the impact of these technologies on the societies of member States as well as the related opportunities and challenges to economic development and social progress, and to facilitate their integration into the global knowledge-based economy. Throughout this work, special focus is given to e-policy and e-regulation for the information society

### **2.2 Economic Analysis**

The Economic Analysis Division provides analytical inputs and studies on the impact of the ICT sector on the economic growth of member countries. A specific study is underway focusing on the structural changes caused by the ICT revolution on the growth of demand and output in advanced economies, emphasizing the sector's crucial contribution in recent years. This study discusses recent sector-specific and economy-wide cyclical developments (e.g. the bursting of the bubble and the cyclical downturn).

Recent indicators will be examined to determine whether the cyclical trough has been reached. Finally, the study will conclude with a discussion of the sector's contribution to future likely developments in demand and output and the role that the sector can be expected to play in the medium term. A part of this study will be published as a chapter of the Economic Survey of Europe in 2003.

### **2.3 Environment and Human Settlements**

The Aarhus Convention actively promotes the principles and priorities of the Bucharest Declaration. In particular, articles 4 and 5 of the Convention deal with the promotion of an information society beneficial to all ("e- inclusion"). Article 5 sets out obligations to collect and disseminate environmental information and requires Parties to expand their information-gathering and dissemination efforts through the use of electronic information tools, particularly electronic databases that are easily accessible to the public through public telecommunications networks.

The first meeting of the Parties to the Convention, held in Lucca, Italy, 21-23 October 2002, addressed the issues of securing access to information and knowledge, promoting universal access and developing human capacity through education and training. In this context the following documents can be mentioned:

- a) The Lucca Declaration, which sets out the agreement of the Parties, Signatories and other States to provide input to the World Summit on the Information Society;
- b) Decision I/6: promotes the use of electronic and other information tools and sets up the Task Force on electronic and information tools, which will prepare recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools to provide better access to information to the public;
- c) Decision I/2: deals with pollutant release and transfer registers and establishes a Working Group responsible for developing a protocol on pollutant release and transfer registers;
- d) Decision I/10: discusses a clearing-house mechanism and capacity-building service, which will, in cooperation with the Task Force on electronic information tools, address the urgent need for assistance to countries in transition in building capacity for more effective implementation of the Convention.

### **2.4 Statistics**

UNECE was approached by a few countries suggesting UNECE to take the initiative of organizing a Statistical Workshop of the World Summit on the Information Society. To this end, UNECE contacted OECD, Eurostat, ITU and a number of countries to further explore if there was an interest in jointly organizing this kind of side event. The reaction was generally positive and it was agreed that an informal preparatory meeting would take place in conjunction with the ITU meeting on ICT Indicators, Geneva, 15-17 January 2003. The informal meeting was announced at the above-mentioned ITU meeting and took place at the end of the session on 15 January. The result of the informal preparatory meeting was reported orally to the ITU meeting on 17 January.

Among the possible topics for the Statistical Workshop, which should have a developing country focus, the following were mentioned:

- Statistical capacity building;
- Measuring the digital divide;
- Review of existing methodologies of ICT statistics;
- Measurement and definition issues including quality issues, prioritisation in ICT measurements, meta data issues and ICT indicators in the framework of the UNECE Fundamental Principles;
- Household budget surveys and ICT.

Further, the Statistical Division has engaged in a project aimed at improving the use of information and communication technologies in fulfilling its management role of servicing the Conference of European Statisticians. An international statistical work programme has been developed in database form and will be made available using web technology. This programme is a tool with which the international official statistics community will be able to monitor ongoing activities in the UNECE region.

In cooperation with the UN Statistics Division in New York, the Statistical Division has also engaged in planning for a technical assistance event for CIS countries. The preliminary idea is to organize a workshop on ICT in support of census management in view of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.

## **2.5 Transport**

UNECE member States are active in the development of new technologies known as Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) that have the potential to make transport more efficient, safer and more environmentally friendly. Provisions on these new technologies are gradually being introduced into the UNECE Agreements and Conventions on vehicle regulations, road safety and road infrastructure.

Some of these technologies, such as navigation systems, cruise control, and systems to optimize the braking of vehicles, are already in wide use and have contributed to lower fuel consumption and fewer accidents. Other vehicle-based systems such as intelligent speed adaptation, collision warning and avoidance (lane departure, rear end, etc.), safe overtaking, drowsiness warning, vision enhancement, repair warning systems are at various stages of development but will be increasingly present in new vehicles.

In addition to systems confined to vehicles, there are a number of other systems dealing with the infrastructure (road) and its relation to the vehicle, again aimed at making roads safer. An example of such a system is intelligent speed adaptation (ISA) that has already undergone trials in urban communities of some UNECE member States.

ITS are also widely applied in traffic management and control through such devices as variable message signs, speed cameras, electronic vehicle detection and toll charging systems, and vehicle positioning and tracking. These systems help traffic flowing freely and improve safety, fuel efficiency and the cost-effectiveness of transport.

Intelligent transport systems are currently under-regulated; thus, there is a need for harmonized policies based on a shared vision of their potential. ITS designs are

developed much more quickly than the corresponding policies and regulations, thus much work is needed to adapt regulations to technological advances.

## **2.6 Trade Development and Timber**

In the area of electronic business and electronic document interchange, the UNECE has been working to develop and adopt standards that allow or facilitate the electronic interchange of data and documents, to strengthen links between different social and commercial actors, foster industry development and facilitate the development of electronic commerce. Electronic business solutions are important to the further development of trade in all member States, and particularly those with transition economies. Obsolete, superfluous, heterogeneous and inadequate trade procedures in many transition economies prevent companies from delivering goods in a reliable, cost-effective manner and therefore reduce their global competitiveness and their ability to participate in global supply chains.

The creation of global e-business standards is critical to all member States as regional or national variations of these standards would result *ipso facto* in technical barriers to trade in the growing area of electronically traded goods and services. Work in this area is also important to maintain current trade levels and costs despite the need for increased controls following the events of 11 September 2001.

Trade facilitation and e-business activities focus on defining simple, transparent and effective procedures and solutions for international trade. The UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-Business (UN/CEFACT) works to develop and maintain UN international electronic business standards, e.g. UN/EDIFACT. UN/CEFACT is currently giving highest priority to the development of new international standards, known as e-bXML, for electronic business using the World Wide Web.

The Division is currently developing the United Nations electronic Trade Documents (UNeDocs) project to develop and implement solutions for trade documentation in both paper and electronic format using recognized international trade and e-business standards. By combining these standards with widely accessible Internet technologies, UNeDocs helps traders in developing countries and transition economies to compete in advanced markets.

The UNECE Trade programme also provides a collaborative platform for work with the other UN regional commissions. Presently, the UNECE, ESCWA and ECA are collaborating on a joint Mediterranean trade facilitation initiative. This project will facilitate and promote the use of modern electronic business standards for SMEs in the Mediterranean region.

The UNECE has set up a network of Multiplier Points in 24 transition economies. These Multiplier Points disseminate information about best practices in trade from the UNECE and the UN system to governments, business, trade associations, NGOs, and civil society groups in UNECE member States. The network members then promote, distribute and translate into national languages reports, recommendations, standards, documents, publications and other forms of information. The programme significantly contributes to local capacity building and supports effective implementation of the work done at the UNECE. There are currently 51 member organizations from 24 Central and Eastern European countries and the CIS.

The United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) in Europe has recently been updated after its partnership with UNDESA. The UNPAN provides an online contact network of all those institutions in UNECE member States, which provide training for e-government and reform of public administration.

### **3. UNECE's cross-sectoral and coordination aspects**

The UNECE promotes cross-sectoral activities in the field of ICT and related policy areas. This is part of the wider interest of the organization to stimulate and support an integrated approach to policy making, in line with the strategic directions endorsed by member countries.

#### **3.1 Cross-sectoral automation project between Trade and Transport**

The Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division have been working on a programme for the automation of the TIR carnet using the electronic business solutions developed by the Trade Division's UNeDocs (United Nations electronic Trade Documents) project.

The key aspect of the project is in dealing with the constraints and advantages of being able to use both the paper and the electronic TIR carnet for transition economies and interfacing with the EU transit system. Cost-effective and technically-feasible solutions are required.

Cooperation between the Trade, ICT and Transport policy fields is therefore necessary to build synergies for achieving effective automation of the TIR carnet.

#### **3.2 Gender and Information Society**

The UNECE promotes the process of mainstreaming gender into the Information Society, including through organization of the discussion during the WSIS process, Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005. The problems, which have to be addressed and are relevant to UNECE activities include (i) lack of gender disaggregated ICT data; (ii) including gender into the process of preparation of national programmes on ICT and Information Society; and (iii) support to building women's capacity to use ICT for business development.

The UNECE supported the preparatory meeting of CIS countries for the Summit, which was held at the ministerial level in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (September 2002). The resolution adopted at this Conference recognizes the existence of gender digital divide and recommends to use ICT as a means to reduce gender inequality and ensure equal participation of women in building an Information Society at local, national and regional levels. Subsequently, the UNECE, together with the Romanian Government and in cooperation with ITU, UNIFEM and UNDP, organized a Round Table on Gender and ICT, as a side event during the Pan-European Ministerial Conference for WSIS in Bucharest. Opportunities for using ICT as a tool for advancing gender equality were discussed in relation to increasing women's employability, networking among NGOs networks addressing gender issues, E-learning and women's political participation through e-governance.

## LIST OF MEETINGS

### Meetings in 2002

- **February 2002, Geneva:** *First UNECE Conference on E-Regulations*
- **April 2002, Geneva:** *European Regional Meeting on the UN ICT Task Force Regional Network, hosted by UNECE*
- **June 2002, Geneva,** *UNECE Forum on Online Dispute Resolution*
- **September 2002, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan:** *Bishkek Stakeholder Conference on the Information Society for the CIS Region*
- **3-4 October, Brussels:** *UNECE-EU joint Expert Panel on E-Strategy and E-Policy Development for transition economies*
- **October 2002, Moscow:** *follow-up meeting to the Bishkek Stakeholder Conference*
- **October 2002, Belgrade:** *Telecommunication for Development Conference*
- **21-23 October 2002, Lucca, Italy:** *First Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention*
- **7-9 November 2002, Bucharest:** *Pan-European Regional Ministerial Conference in preparation of WSIS*
- **13-15 November 2002, Skopje, CEI Summit Economic Forum:** the UNECE organized a special session on *A European Space for Science, Information and Technology*, presenting concrete ICT-related projects and opportunities.
- **13-14 December, Caserta, Italy:** *UNECE Conference on E-Government for Public Sector Management*, organised jointly with the Italian Government

### Meetings in 2003

- **12 February, UNECE Workshop on E-Regulations:** *E-Security and the Knowledge Economy* (EU, WIPO, ITU and OECD), organized by TSIED as a contribution to the WSIS process
- **17-19 February 2003, Geneva, UNECE/Eurostat/OECD meeting** *on Management of Statistical Information Systems*

- **24-25 February 2003, Geneva, UNECE/UNDP Round Table *Overcoming Obstacles to the Information Society: Business Solutions***
- **26 February 2003, Geneva, meeting of the Steering Group for the preparation of a *Statistical Workshop at WSIS*.** The Steering Group includes UNECE, ITU, UNCTAD, UNESCO, World Bank, Eurostat, OECD, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Spain and Switzerland.
- **17-18 March 2003, Geneva: *Second Forum of Women Entrepreneurs***  
The Forum will include sessions presenting best practice of governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations for improving women's access to E-Business
- **14-15 May 2003, Geneva: *UNECE International Forum on Trade Facilitation***
- **23 May 2003, Kiev: *Meeting of Parties to the Aarhus Convention*** on "Access to Information, Public Participation in decision making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters".
- **30 June-1 July 2003, Geneva: UNECE Forum on *Online Dispute Resolution*,** organised in cooperation with FTC, EU, UNCITRAL, OECD, ITU, WIPO, ICC, NGOS. The Forum takes place under the auspices of the TSIED as a contribution to the WSIS process
- **6-7- November 2003, Geneva: *Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development***
- **19-21 November 2003, Warsaw: *CEI Economic Summit*.** The Summit will include a session devoted to the ICT policies, the WSIS and related actions and projects in the CEI countries
- **November 2003, Geneva: *UNECE Knowledge Economy Forum*,** organized by TSIED as a contribution to the WSIS process
- **December 2003:** a few events and initiatives are being considered in connection with the Summit. At this stage the planning and preparation for these possible events is still preliminary, and therefore subject to discussion and feedback.
  - *Round Table on Women's Entrepreneurship.* The Round Table aims at presenting best practice of governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations in improving women's access to E-Business
    - An event on the *Gender Aspects of Building an Information Society* is planned, organized in cooperation with the ITU Working Group on Gender, ITC and UNIFEM.

- A side event is being planned, on *the use of ICT for the management of the European gas transportation network*, in collaboration with the GTE (Gas Transmission Europe) and Gazprom.

- The Aarhus Convention Secretariat is planning to contribute to a side event, which would address the *rights to freedom of opinion and expression, the principles of good governance and public participation* for enhancing the Information Society.

- The standardization bodies ISO, IEC, ITU-T and the UNECE are proposing a side event in December 2003, dealing with *the role of international standards*.

- A side event on E-Policy and E-Regulations is being considered, organized by the Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development.

-A *Statistical workshop* is being planned, organised in cooperation with the main organisations dealing with statistics active in the ECE region

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

### Already issued:

- **Trading into the future: E-services for Trade, Investment and Enterprise**, UNECE Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, 2002
- **Simplification.Com: Electronic Business and the Simplification of Administration**, UNECE, 2002
- **Investiguide** A Handbook on Investment Opportunities in the CEI region. The handbook is produced by the UNECE in cooperation with the CEI Secretariat. A new edition of this handbook, which includes a project portfolio and information for investors on CEI countries, was presented during the annual CEI Summit Economic Forum. The projects are also available on the World Bank's IPAnet, on CEI's Internet Database, and through links on the UNECE Web Site.
- **UNECE Knowledge Economy Reports**  
Nine Country Readiness Assessment Reports "Towards a Knowledge-based Economy" and a Regional Assessment Report have been published in 2002. They can also be found on the UNECE website. Moreover, a Review Series on "E-Policy and E-Regulations: Information Economy Reports" has been prepared and presented at the Bucharest Conference, including more than 15 countries.

### Forthcoming:

- **Cyberspace Regulatory Framework Development: Issues**  
This publication compiles the papers and presentations made at the 2002 UNECE Workshop under the same title. It provides an overview of the main issues arising from the development cyberspace and challenges being posed on jurisdictions, choice of law, and convergence of law and technology. A dozen of experts have contributed to this book, which will be issued in Spring 2003.
- **Online Dispute Resolution**  
Experts taking part in the UNECE 2002 Forum on Online Dispute Resolution decided to put together their efforts in the form of a single document with an aim of offering the state-of-art ODR issues to the public in layman's terms. It will be a companion for those who wish to understand an important building block for establishing the information society with the online tool of Alternative Dispute Resolution.
- **E-Government Development**  
This will be a compilation of the presentations made at the UNECE 2002 Caserta Conference on Public Management for E-Government held under the auspices of SSPA and the Italian Government. Different views and analysis on the issue will be presented as proceedings for the conference.

- **Trade data Interchange Directory** (UN/EDIFACT), Internet publication, 2 issues. (April and October 2003)
- **Revised Trade Facilitation, UN/EDIFACT and Electronic Commerce Online.** Training manual and technical material to be published both on paper and on the Internet, March 2003
- **Booklet on work done by UN/CEFACT** to support the use of electronic business and trading by SMEs and countries in transition, September 2003
- **World Robotics**, October 2003
- **The macroeconomic impact of the ICT sector – Recent developments and outlook**, Study prepared by the Economic Analysis Division of the UNECE