

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Developing Entrepreneurship in the UNECE Region

*Country experience
in reducing barriers to
enterprise development*



UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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FOREWORD

At advanced stages of transition to a market economy, entrepreneurship and enterprise development come to the forefront of the development agenda. With their new technologies and innovative solutions, new enterprises strengthen economic competitiveness and sustainability. They also enhance macroeconomic efficiency, as well as creating employment.

However, in countries with economies in transition (or “emerging market economies”), both new and operational companies often face formidable administrative and regulatory barriers to enterprise registration and operation. At the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, we identify and examine good practices in reducing or eliminating such barriers and provide a platform for sharing the accumulated country experience. We also advise member Governments on policy actions.

The current publication takes stock of the numerous barriers to enterprise development and highlights the regulatory changes aimed at removing such obstacles in countries with economies in transition. It assesses government policy in this area and summarizes the recommendations emanating from the 2007 UNECE International Conference on Reducing Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Encouraging Enterprise Development: Policy Options.

I hope that the publication will be of interest and of practical use to policymakers and other stakeholders endeavouring to eliminate barriers to entrepreneurship and enterprise development in the emerging market economies of the region.



Marek Belka
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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
OVERVIEW	vii
INTRODUCTION	xi
I. “ENTREPRENEURSHIP”: Definition, Economic Potential and Drivers	1
II. MAJOR OBSTACLES TO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT,..... AND GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THEM	5
<i>A. Reducing the Administrative Barriers</i>	8
1. Establishment of enterprises.....	8
2. Operational enterprises.....	15
3. Recommendations by International Organizations and Government Action.....	17
<i>B. Lowering Tax Rates and simplifying the Tax Administration</i>	22
1. Tax rates	25
2. Number of tax payments	29
3. Time needed to comply with taxation requirements	31
<i>C. Securing Financing of Start-Ups and SMEs</i>	32
1. Banks	33
2. Leasing	35
3. Microfinancing	36
<i>D. Reducing Obstacles to SME Expansion Abroad</i>	37
<i>E. Fighting Corruption</i>	40
<i>F. Raising Awareness of Gender-Specific Obstacles and Helping Women Entrepreneurs</i>	47
<i>G. Alleviating Psychological and Cultural Barriers</i>	50
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNECE	53
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “Reducing Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Encouraging Enterprise Development: Policy Options”	53
CONCLUSIONS	53
RECOMMENDATIONS	55
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	57
ANNEX.....	61
Notes to Tables: Selected Indicators Measuring the Impediments to Entrepreneurship in UNECE Countries	61

ABBREVIATIONS

ACOA	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
AMD	Dram [Armenian Currency]
APEC	Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation
BEEPS	Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey
CE	Council of Europe
CEB	Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States
CEN	European Committee for Standardization [EU]
CHASE	Chambers against Stereotypes in Employment
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
DOC	Department of Commerce [United States]
EBA	European Business Association
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia
EFMD	European Foundation for Management Development
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FIAS	Foreign Investment Advisory Service
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IPM	Institute for Privatization and Management [NGO in Minsk, Belarus]
ISO	International Organization of Standardization
NABK	National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption [Kyrgyzstan]
NSBK	National Council to Combat the Corruption [Kyrgyzstan]
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
R&D	research and development
RBC	Royal Bank of Canada
SEE	South-East Europe
SECO	Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
STP	single tax payment
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNI	Union Network International
US	United States
USD	United States dollar
WEF	World Economic Forum
WBI	Women in Business Initiative

OVERVIEW

In the emerging market economies¹ (“countries in transition”) of the region covered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector emerged as a result of privatization and the break-up of large State-owned enterprises, as well as market liberalization and the setting up of demand-driven private companies. The weight of SMEs in economic activities varies considerably within this group of countries. Whereas in the new EU member States it is generally close to the EU average, in many countries of South-East Europe and the former Soviet Union, it is much lower.

In both developed and emerging market economies, entrepreneurs perceive major obstacles to enterprise development in a similar way, referring primarily to the inefficiency of governance (government bureaucracy and corruption), taxation issues (tax administration and taxation rates) and inadequate access to finance. However, the impact of these obstacles on the new and operational enterprises is greater in emerging economies.

Inefficient governance means administrative barriers such as burdensome establishment rules, excessive reporting requirements and associated paperwork, inadequate information on changes in norms and regulations, and ruinous penalties for violations of regulations. For starting a new enterprise, the administrative steps, stipulated by law, usually include obtaining an operational permit, notarizing the company deeds, opening a bank account and registering and/or obtaining authorization from various government agencies.

For existing small companies, the administrative barriers include complex reporting requirements, government inspections, tax administration, import and export licensing and procedures, foreign exchange procedures, product certification and labour regulations. In emerging economies, the legal bases for enterprise inspections remain complex, spanning multiple jurisdictions and government bodies.

To deal with administrative barriers to entrepreneurship, countries of the region largely follow similar policies, drawing on good practices and on recommendations by international organizations. They focus on streamlining the legislative basis for enterprise registration and operation, simplifying the procedures to follow and reducing their number, decreasing the amount of time required to start operations, lowering the financial burden associated with enterprise establishment and alleviating the supervisory burden incurred by

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