Two Russian universities join the Vi network

Moscow's State University Higher School of Economics (HSE) and St. Petersburg State University (SPSU) joined the Vi network in July, bringing the number of core and affiliate member universities to 21 and 11 respectively.

HSE, the core Vi member in Russia, is among the top-three most prestigious universities in the country, and is the biggest centre for socio-economic analysis. The network's counterpart at HSE, the Institute for Trade Policy, was founded in 2004 to provide research, consultancy and educational services in the areas of international trade and trade policy, and multilateral trade regulation instruments. HSE, which has been working with Canadian Vi member, Carleton University's Centre for Trade Policy and Law, was introduced to the Vi during a joint visit to Geneva.

HSE’s member coordinators, Tatiana Isachenko (isachenko@mgimo.ru) and Oleg Savelyev (savelyev_oleg@mail.ru), are both professors in the World Economy Department.

St. Petersburg State University, joining as affiliate member, first became acquainted with the Vi in April, when the Vi hosted a study tour in Geneva for 12 postgraduate students and professors of its Department of World Economy, an educational and research entity of the Faculty of Economics established in 1996.

SPSU's member coordinator, Sergey Sutyrin (sutyrin@hotmail.com) is Head of the Department of World Economy.

The two Russian universities join Belarus State Economic University and Ukraine’s Vadym Hetman Kiev National Economic University to represent transition economy countries in the Vi network.

For more information on the new members, visit the university profiles section of our website.

UNCTAD Secretary-General visits Vi member university in Belarus

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, UNCTAD's Secretary-General, met with Dr. Vladimir Shimov, Rector of the Belarus State Economic University (BSEU), to discuss future cooperation during a visit to Belarus on July 17. Three areas were discussed:

- UNCTAD’s assistance in developing a Masters programme in International Economic Cooperation
- Hosting of a regional course on Key International Economic Issues for policy-makers and academics from transition countries in Minsk next year
- Organization of a regional professional development workshop for transition country universities and research institutes on the Economics of Commodity Production and Trade -- based on teaching material developed by the Virtual Institute and UNCTAD's Commodities Branch, currently being translated into Russian.

The importance of UNCTAD’s support to tertiary education on trade through the Virtual Institute was highlighted in Dr. Supachai's meetings with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Belarus. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Republic of Belarus, UNCTAD and the UNDP office in Belarus citing the Virtual Institute and the regional course on Key International Economic Issues as priority areas for cooperation.

Since BSEU joined the network in May, Vi has provided it with all Vi teaching materials, as well as nearly 70 UNCTAD publications to enrich its library. BSEU is also participating in a project of local adaptation of a Vi generic teaching material on economic and legal aspects of foreign direct investment by producing a version of the material tailored to the context of the country. This will include the drafting of a special module with a comparative analysis of FDI in the neighbouring countries, additions of relevant examples to the text, inclusion of country and region-relevant publications in the reading list, development of PowerPoint presentations and translation of some modules into Russian. Ultimately, the material will be published as a handbook for students.

For more information about BSEU, take a look at the university profiles section of our website, or contact the Vi coordinator at petrushkevich@list.ru.
**BSEU lecturer attends UNCTAD course on investment**

Vi member coordinator at Belarus State Economic University (BSEU), Alena Petrushkevich, attended the first regional course on international investment agreements (IIAs) and investment disputes for transition economies held in Minsk, 16-25 July 2007.

The course, organized by UNCTAD's International Investment Arrangements Section, consisted of interactive presentations by negotiators of IIAs, specialists from international organizations, academics, and IIA practitioners, and a simulated negotiation of a comprehensive investment arrangement.

"It was unique because of its concept and the high quality of teaching encompassing both theoretical and empirical issues. It was intensive, coherent, concise and interesting and resulted in useful suggestions of measures for the strengthening of national legislation systems of transition countries in conformity with international rules," Petrushkevich said.

The course, along with other activities, such as the adaptation of the Vi teaching material on FDI (see news item above), will serve to strengthen BSEU's Masters programme on International Investment.

**UNCTAD expert participates in EAFIT conference**

Former Venezuelan trade negotiator, Manuela Tortora, now Chief of UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation Service, addressed the IV Congress of International Business, sponsored by Vi university member EAFIT (Colombia) August 16-17 in Medellín.

The objective of this year's theme, "Cultural Links and Processes in International Negotiations," was to increase understanding of the impact of multiculturalism in building consensus during economic negotiations in today's globalized economy.

In Tortora's presentation - "What does it take to be an international negotiator?" - she questioned the assumption that to be an effective negotiator it suffices to have diplomatic skills. "Diplomats used to say that war is too serious a business to be left to the military; you, the students of today, can legitimately say that international economic negotiations are too serious to be left to politicians and diplomats," she said.

Tortora also presented a paper exploring major aspects of trade negotiations, and offered support for EAFIT's International Economic Negotiation and Dispute Resolution programme.

**Vi members take part in Lima regional course**

Vi member universities, Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) from Argentina, and Escuela de Administración, Finanzas y Tecnologías (EAFIT) from Colombia, along with two Vi associate members, participated in UNCTAD's third regional course on Key International Economic Issues for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Lima, Perú, June 18 - July 6.

"I had an extremely rich professional and personal experience at the Lima course," writes Valentina Delich, FLACSO's Vi member coordinator, who contributed as a resource person to the module on WTO issues, presenting the implications for Latin American and Caribbean countries of the dynamic relationship between regionalism and multilateralism.

"I participated in the last module – so when I arrived the group had been working together for three weeks, almost eight hours a day... (A)though they were very tired they were highly motivated," she said.

Vi member Rafael Tamayo Franco, of EAFIT, and two associate members, Orlando M. da Silva, from Brazil, and Katty Díaz Morales, from Venezuela, also took part in the course.

Da Silva is already using some of the knowledge gained from the course. He has incorporated topics on ICT and Investment into the courses he teaches at the Economics Department of the Universidade Federal de Viosa. He has also presented a seminar on new issues on international trade for colleagues and students, and has two graduate students working on non-tariff barriers and trade on minerals, topics discussed during the training course.

"The simulation exercise we have done on trade in tourism services, at the end of the course, was a great experience. We could really see how the negotiations take place, and act as a country negotiator, going through the official background documentation, to the initial domestic consultations, to bilateral consultations, filling the GATS schedule, until the final meeting at WTO," he said.

In an effort to strengthen the link between research and policy-making, the Virtual Institute encourages its members to participate in the course, and/or to contribute as resource persons. For more information about the courses, visit [unctad.org](http://unctad.org).
Tanzania’s Vi member Master programme benefits from UNCTAD training

The Vi, in cooperation with UNCTAD’s branches on Trade Analysis and Commodities, of the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, organized two courses in support of Tanzania’s University of Dar-es-Salaam’s Master of International Trade.

The first course, on the economics of commodities production was held in June, and addressed 39 students. Francis Matambalya, the university’s Vi member coordinator, said this was “the best delivered course, ever since we launched the Programme in July 2005.”

The students agreed, one of them saying it "was an extremely relevant course, given the commodity dependence of our economy. The course separated myths from reality of commodity production and trade, and offered us important insights about how we can improve our situation.”

The second course, on the World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) software, addressed the Master programme's staff in July.

“The WITS course was an important eye opener for our junior staff to trade policy analysis, though we should also say we still need more training in this area, given the technical nature of the course,” Matambalya said.

"The support from the UNCTAD Vi, in terms of the donations of books and other teaching materials, and mobilisation and deployment of UNCTAD teaching staff, has been very instrumental in realising this programme," he added.

Vi members from Mauritius and Colombia participate in Canadian training

The Centre for Trade Policy and Law (CTPL), Vi’s Canadian member based at Carleton University, offered the Vi membership places on its annual training course on international trade law in July. The offer was part of Vi’s ongoing cooperation projects among members.

The two participants, Maria Alejandra Calle, from EAFIT University in Medellin, Colombia, and Daniel Fokkan, from the University of Mauritius, will continue their collaboration with CTPL by establishing courses in their own departments following the model at CTPL. EAFIT plans to integrate the materials into a course on negotiations and dispute resolution, while Mauritius is planning to offer courses in trade law. CTPL will also be involved in providing curriculum advice and teaching expertise during the running of the courses.

Professor Calle, with the support of CTPL and the Canadian Studies Center of EAFIT University, will soon participate in two more seminars at CTPL: “Canada and the international trading system: Refocusing the agenda,” October 29-30 and “Value Chains and the New Trade Policy Agenda,” on November 1. EAFIT also plans to offer a seminar on Commercial Diplomacy for Colombia’s Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs next year.

"This new link of academic cooperation will allow the further enrichment of projects with an emphasis on International Economic Negotiation and Dispute Resolution at the International Business Program at EAFIT University," said Sascha Furst, Vi member coordinator at EAFIT.

Second year of the Virtual Institute Fellowship programme takes off

Researchers from Vi member universities in Senegal and South Africa began their fellowships at UNCTAD in September. The fellowship programme provides participating members with access to experts and resources from UNCTAD and other partner organizations, in order to help them advance in their research projects.

El Haji Faye (pictured on the right), Academic director of the Training Institute for Administration and Enterprise at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, has been looking into ways in which the introduction or strengthening of internal accounting systems could help Senegalese enterprises better control their costs and, consequently, increase their competitiveness. Yoseph Asmelash of UNCTAD’s Division on Investment, Technology and Enterprise Development, acts as his mentor during his stay.

Fodiyé Bakary Doucouré (pictured standing), Chief of the Department of Quantitative Techniques in Dakar, has been conducting a quantitative analysis of determinants of private investment in WAEMU (UEMOA, in French) countries. In particular, he examines macroeconomic factors with a bearing on private investment, as well as their relationship with economic policies aimed at promoting investment. Marco Fugazza, from the Division on International Trade in Goods, Services, and Commodities, works with him on UNCTAD’s behalf.

The Senegal fellowships are funded by a contribution from the government of Finland.

The third fellow, Johan Fourie (pictured left), is a lecturer at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa and a Vi associate member. He also participated in a Vi professional development workshop last year. During his stay, Johan, who bears
himself the cost of his travel and stay in Geneva, will be working on the development of a proposal for his PhD studies.

> UPCOMING EVENTS

**Vi membership meeting: Mark your calendars!**
Preparations are underway for the next Vi meeting, scheduled for February 4-8, in Geneva.

Proposals for content and structure of the meeting have begun to come in, with some members requesting to follow the model of last year's meeting, featuring interactive sessions and opportunities for networking.

The Vi will provide one representative from member universities in developing countries and countries in transition with a pre-paid air ticket, and an allocation to cover lodging and other expenses related to their stay in Geneva. Additional colleagues and representatives from affiliate universities may attend, provided they cover their own expenses.

Please send your ideas to vi@unctad.org.

**Vi workshop: Teaching and Research of Trade and Poverty**
The Virtual Institute will bring together academics from African countries and experts from UNCTAD for a professional development workshop to be held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, November 19-23. The event is organized in cooperation with UNCTAD's Divisions on Africa and the Least Developed Countries, and on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities and Virtual Institute member, the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania.

The week-long workshop will look at the main macroeconomic and microeconomic concepts underlying the trade and poverty relationship; identify research questions; cover access to and use of data; and examine the advantages and problems of various research methods. Special attention will be given to national and international policy implications, and to how the results of applied research can best be communicated to policy-makers and other interest groups. The workshop will also provide opportunities for networking and the sharing of teaching and research experiences among the attending academics.

Parallel to the workshop, the Vi is currently developing a generic teaching material on the same topic. The material is being peer-reviewed by Vi members and will be made available on the Vi website in November.

Fifty-five candidates have already applied for the workshop. Funding of travel and lodging expenses will be allocated with a priority for candidates from Least Developed Countries. Due to the large number of applications received, funding will not be available for candidates from non-LDC countries in Africa.

Deadline for applications is October 5. Information and application forms are available on the Vi website.

**Short courses for Geneva delegates kick off second semester**
Based on the success of the first semester courses, in which 93 delegates from 61 UNCTAD member states participated, three more half-day sessions on Key International Economic Issues were scheduled for the second half of 2007.

The first in this series, dealing with the development dimensions of intellectual property rights (IPRs), took place September 21. The second course, scheduled for October 30, will discuss measures to limit the risks arising from public sector debt. The last of the series, looking at the development interface between the multilateral trading system and regional trade agreements, will take place on November 23.

> TEACHING RESOURCES
Materials from UNCTAD short courses on competition policy, IPRs now available

Presentations and publications distributed at the latest sessions of the Short Courses on Key International Economic Issues for Geneva-based delegates can be accessed through the website.

The July short course took a look at the interface between competition policy, trade, investment and development. Issues discussed included the design, implementation and enforcement of effective competition policy; the roles of the government and the competition authority; abuse of market power; and the interaction of competition policies with trade liberalization, FDI and privatization and/or deregulation.

The September short course on intellectual property rights looked at economic, legal and development implications of IPRs, and used the case of public health to analyze how international agreements have built-in flexibility to help developing countries achieve a better balance between exclusive rights and the public domain.

Members experiencing internet access difficulties may request CD-Roms by contacting susana.olivares@unctad.org.

Agriculture negotiations material now online

UNCTAD's Trade Negotiations and Commercial Diplomacy Branch has published a training module on Multilateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture that may prove useful both in the classroom and in research.

The module first provides background on the importance of agriculture for developing countries, and describes the current agreement on agricultural trade, with special emphasis on market access, domestic support and export subsidies. It then illustrates these concepts through case studies based on three current disputes. The process of WTO accession is also covered.

Of particular interest to researchers is a chapter on simulating the economic effects of trade liberalization, an area where developing country researchers could produce influential policy research.

> PUBLICATIONS

The Trade and Development Report 2007

The first part of the report provides a discussion of global economic trends, which indicate developing countries are likely to continue to benefit from strong demand for primary commodities. This positive trend in the terms of trade over the past four years has enabled many developing countries to strengthen their external and fiscal balances, to increase investment in their economies, to stabilize or reduce unemployment, and achieve high growth rates. At the same time, increases in real exports of developing countries, in particular from Asia, and a growing current account deficit in the US, have led to a situation where developing countries have become net capital exporters.

However, economic growth and investment prospects could be negatively affected by the persistent current-account imbalances and the risk of a recession in the United States, one of the largest markets for Asian exports. The instability posed to the international trading system by these imbalances and by large speculative capital flows, via differentials in the nominal interest and exchange rates of countries, has - and will continue to - distort the competitiveness of countries and firms, making policy intervention unavoidable.

In response, the report advocates the need for a "code of conduct" to govern competition between nations, although without much prospect of this, developing countries should focus their attention at the regional level. Regional integration, the subject of the report's second part, can be useful in reducing the effects of volatile capital flows and under- and over-evaluations on growth and investment. The experience of the EU is also potentially useful for developing countries because it shows that monetary union, as the final target of integration, is superior to currency anchoring. However, monetary and financial coordination should also be complemented by infrastructure and knowledge generation projects, and industrial policies.
The Least Developed Countries Report 2007

This year’s report looks at the role of technology, knowledge and innovation for creating employment and stimulating economic growth in Least Developed Countries.

The report begins by examining the potential of various international market linkages -- imports of capital goods, exports and the integration of local producers in global value chains, foreign direct investment and licensing -- to build technological capacities. The findings from case studies and empirical analysis indicate that transfer of foreign technology to LDCs has been very limited, despite the generally high levels of trade and FDI integration.

The report goes on to analyse how national policies could promote technological learning and innovation, and concludes that science and technology policies and targets are insufficiently integrated in national development strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). While infrastructure, human capital and financial systems are crucial to development, innovation-oriented policies should also address issues such as the formation of domestic firms, increases in agricultural productivity, upgrading of export activities and the enhancement of technological transfer from trade or FDI by creating links between transnational corporations and local producers.

The report highlights that economic aid should be targeted more specifically at the knowledge capacities of developing countries and emphasizes the use of more appropriate Intellectual Property regimes to stimulate innovation. A case study of Bangladesh provides a detailed analysis of the impact of an intellectual property regime on different sectors of the economy and on domestic and foreign companies.

Migration of persons possessing specific skills and knowledge represents another means of international knowledge and technology transfer that affects the knowledge accumulation in developing countries. The emigration of skilled, educated persons from developing countries has increased over the past 10 years, representing a significant brain drain for these countries. However, the report highlights several policies that could reverse this trend and allow developing countries to take advantage of a ‘brain gain’. Such policy recommendations include mechanisms to facilitate temporary rather than permanent migration; the retention of skilled persons; and assistance to promote return migration.

Economic development in Africa - Reclaiming policy space: Domestic resource mobilization and developmental States

This year’s Economic development in Africa report urges African countries to rely more on domestic resource mobilization for their financial needs, thus claiming ownership of their development processes and addressing their genuine priorities.

The report is informative in terms of actual and theoretical examples of beneficial macroeconomic state interventions, particularly in the African context and when it comes to development financing. As such, it makes interesting background reading for macroeconomics classes and to spark research ideas in the area of domestic resources mobilization.

The document highlights the need for “developmental States” in Africa with the policy space to design and implement policies that address their priorities, make optimal use of available resources and create true ownership in macroeconomic and resource management. Distilling general lessons from a long-term comparison with some of the success stories of East Asia, the report comes up with a number of policy recommendations calling for a move away from preoccupations with the ideological divide between State and market. Detailed recommendations are further given for the financial sector.

>LINKS

WTO - Comprehensive Tariff Data

Information on customs duties has been upgraded on the WTO website in a new, detailed standardized format. The website provides access to new data on the tariffs that governments actually charge on imports, which have a direct impact on trade.

The data is presented in Excel sheets, using the 6-digit level codes of the World Customs Organization’s internationally agreed “Harmonized System” (HS) for defining product categories. A direct link to the information can be found under the “Goods schedules and tariff data” section of each WTO member country’s profile.
World Intellectual Property Organization
http://www.wipo.int/portal/index.html.en
The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that provides legislative advice, training, tools and assistance to member countries in formulating national IP strategies.

The website grants free access to useful databases on intellectual property legislation from a wide range of countries and regions as well as to treaties on intellectual property. This information is available under "Resources". In addition, the WIPO Academy (http://www.wipo.int/academy/en/) provides online training and Summer School courses on IP including professional training, distance learning, policy development, teaching and research.

African Regional Intellectual Property Organization
http://www.aripo.org/
ARIPO was established in the 1970's by the initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the World Intellectual Property Rights Organization (WIPO). It facilitates continuous exchange of information, harmonization and co-ordination of its member states' laws and activities in industrial property matters. Membership is open to member states of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa or the African Union.

Apart from general information on application procedures for various forms of IP, the website provides regular newsletters about the latest developments in IP jurisdiction as well as a list of patent and trademark agencies in the ARIPO region. The site also grants free access to IP application form samples including industrial designs, patents, trademarks and other legal documents.

The organization also offers training in the field of IP for the public and private sectors at its regional training centre in Zimbabwe.

Global Trade Negotiations Homepage - Center for International Development at Harvard University
http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/index.htm
Launched in 1999, the Global Trade Negotiations Home Page is an academic resource that gathers and disseminates information and research on the multilateral trade system without advocating any specific trade policies, or supporting any particular ideology.

The 'trade issues' page offers good summaries of the major topics in trade, and provides links to specialized resources for each issue area. The resources include trade data and country summaries. The website also provides recent news articles on developments in international trade policy and access to various research papers. The government pages features information how trade is affecting different players in the international trade arena.

>PEOPLE

Changes at the Centre for Trade Policy and Law, Canada and UWI, Barbados
We are very sorry to have to say goodbye to CTPL's Vi member coordinator of three years, Sarah Geddes, who has recently left the centre to take up a post at the Ministry of Trade in Canada. We greatly appreciate her involvement in the network and her contribution to the ongoing success of Vi's activities (see for example Newsletter #11 December 2006). We wish her all the best in her new post.

At the same time, it is our pleasure to welcome her replacement at CTPL, Chantal Blouin (chantal_blouin@carleton.ca) who will be taking over from Sarah in the coming weeks and will be representing CTPL, along with its Executive Director Phil Rourke, at the next Vi meeting in February.

Earlier this summer, Vi member coordinator at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Pamela Coke Hamilton, left her position at the University to take up a permanent post in the Organisation of American States in Washington. We wish her every success in her new post and will sorely miss her formidable energy and commitment to the Masters program she established on International Trade Policy, and to the Vi's activities (see for example Newsletter #6 September 2005).

It is also a pleasure to welcome her successor, Neil Paul (npaul@uwichill.edu.bb), who will become the member coordinator for the UWI, and will be representing the university at the Vi meeting in February.

>FEEDBACK
The Virtual Institute welcomes any feedback, both positive and critical, about the Vi Newsletter. Is it clear? Are the links helpful? Do they work? Equally, if there is any aspect of UNCTAD's work that you would like to see reported in the newsletter, please make suggestions and we will try to cover it. We would also welcome any news items from member universities about their current activities. Send all comments to: susana.olivares@unctad.org

Previous issues are available on the website.

ALSO, if you haven't already, please have a look at our website and familiarize yourself with its structure and content.

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development is a capacity-building and knowledge-sharing programme designed to strengthen the capacities of academic institutions, particularly in developing countries, to teach and research trade issues.

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