

# BISNIS Bulletin



Facilitating Commercial Success  
in Eurasia

July/August 2004



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U.S. Department of Commerce  
International Trade Administration

## Clearing Customs in Eurasia: BISNIS Survey Results

Dealing with customs clearance is essential to a successful export transaction, and can also affect performance of direct investments into business ventures in Eurasia, but it can be a difficult process to navigate. Customs regulations, procedures, and duties vary among the Eurasian countries and can change often. Moreover, basic information on customs documentation, duties, and other issues of the clearance process (especially, in English language) can be quite difficult to find.

To help U.S. companies easily access the most relevant information for clearing customs and reduce some of the uncertainty in approaching Eurasian markets, BISNIS undertook, in early 2004, a survey of customs clearance into Eurasia. The survey, conducted by BISNIS representatives in 10 countries (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), addresses key practical aspects of customs clearance procedures, including customs regimes, valuation methodologies, documentation requirements, and duties and taxes, and provides contact information for customs agencies, posts of entry, and customs brokers and freight forwarders. The Russian survey, compiled from information collected by BISNIS representatives in 10 Russian regions, also provides region-specific information on local customs offices, customs

brokers and warehouses, prevalent import commodity types, and transportation modes.

### Major Findings

- All the countries of Eurasia have been involved in a major effort over the last 12 years to modernize their customs systems and bring them in line with much of the rest of the world.
- The push toward the modernization of the customs systems of all these countries is being driven by three key factors: the desire for WTO accession and attempt at synchronization with WTO membership requirements; trade and investment promotion; and internal agreements, such as the CIS Unified Customs zone, and the efforts to make their systems compatible with one another.
- The rate of success of these efforts varies from country to country and all of them still struggle with such problems as inadequate infrastructure and corrupt officials, but overall progress can be observed.
- Major developments following the implementation in January 2004 of the new Customs Code of the Russian Federation illustrate positive changes in customs clearance processes that are applicable to most Eurasian countries:
  1. The new code drastically simplified clearance procedures, reducing the number of applicable regulations to 100 from 4,000.

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## U.S. Catalog Show at KIOGE 2004

12th Kazakhstan International Oil and  
Gas Exhibition (KIOGE)

October 5–8, 2004

Almaty, Kazakhstan

Organizer: **ITE Group**

Web site: [www.kioge.kz/en](http://www.kioge.kz/en)

This event, expected to draw representatives of more than 400 companies from 35 countries, is a good vehicle for U.S. firms wishing to promote their goods and services in Kazakhstan's booming energy sector. Companies interested in determining market interest at low cost are invited to participate in the U.S. Commercial Service's Catalog Show. The U.S. Catalog Show will display catalogs and brochures of U.S. companies and actively market these companies at the exhibition.

For more information, contact Ms. Azhar Kadrzhanova, U.S. Commercial Service Almaty, tel: +7 (3272) 50-48-50, email: [azhar.kadrzhanova@mail.doc.gov](mailto:azhar.kadrzhanova@mail.doc.gov), or visit [www.buyusa.gov/kazakhstan](http://www.buyusa.gov/kazakhstan).



## 3rd Baikal Economic Forum

September 14–17, 2004

Irkutsk, Russia

Organizer: **SibExpoCenter**

This international congress is intended to support the increasing role of Siberia and the Russian Far East in global economic integration, and to develop practical solutions for sustainable economic growth, environment protection, transportation, power engineering, information technologies and human potential of Russia. Baikal Economic Forum allows Russian and foreign businessmen, officials, and scientists to discuss and coordinate their efforts in these spheres. Held near one of Russia's most famous resort areas, Lake Baikal, the event also provides its participants the unique opportunity to explore the natural beauty of Siberia.

For more information on the forum, email: [fair@sibexpo.ru](mailto:fair@sibexpo.ru) or visit [www.forum.baikal.ru](http://www.forum.baikal.ru).

For more information on business opportunities in Siberia, visit **BISNIS** online at: <http://bisnis.doc.gov/siberia>.

# BISNIS

*Facilitating Commercial Success  
in Eurasia*

BISNIS is the U.S. government's primary market information center for U.S. companies exploring business opportunities in Eurasia. Operated by the **Market Access and Compliance** unit of the **International Trade Administration**, BISNIS disseminates information in print form, electronically, and through consultations by its staff of trade specialists.

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# Georgia: Opening New Business Opportunities

by Mamuka Tsereteli

Recent political events in Georgia, including the election of a U.S.-educated president, have dramatically changed the attitude of the international community toward the country, putting it back on the radar screen of international donors and financial institutions. At the donor summit in Brussels on June 16–17, major donor countries pledged to contribute more than \$1 billion to Georgia during 2004–2006. In addition, Georgia is one of only 16 countries named as eligible for \$1 billion of financial aid from the U.S. government's new Millennium Challenge Corporation ([www.mcc.gov](http://www.mcc.gov)). These positive signs of trust in Georgia come as, for the first time in the history of modern Georgia, the government presented a new vision for the economic development of the country—turn Georgia from a recipient of foreign assistance into an economy in which sustainable growth is driven by the private sector and is targeted at poverty reduction. Private sector development priorities were clearly formulated: reinforce property rights and increase private ownership of land, natural resources, and enterprises; create favorable conditions for effective business and growing investments; and reduce regulations and simplify the tax system. Progress on these objectives will make Georgia a more attractive place for U.S. business interests.

## A Less Burdensome Tax Regime

In June, the government announced plans for tax reform, including the reduction of the number of taxes to nine from the current 21, which is an important step in creating a better climate for business in the country. Among the taxes to be eliminated are: the tax on ownership of motor vehicles, the tax on transfer of property, and the tax on economic activity. Only the following taxes will remain in force: income tax, social tax, profit tax, value-added tax (VAT), excise tax, property tax, gambling tax, property tax, and the tax on the use of natural resources.

The rates of some of the taxes will also be reduced. The social tax will fall to 20 percent from the current 33 percent, income tax—from 20 percent to 12 percent, value added tax—from 20 percent to 18 percent. The profit tax will remain at 20 percent. The new tax code is planned to become effective starting in 2005. However, the government intends to test the new system earlier and begin the enforcement of the new



*The Tbilisi Marriott Hotel in Georgia*

social and income tax rates as early as November 2004. Although the business community would prefer a sharper reduction of the rates of VAT and profit taxes, these changes will nonetheless increase the attractiveness of Georgia as a place for investments and trade.

## Opportunities

The prospects for privatization and management contracts for state-owned facilities should also attract the attention of the investment community. Privatization of state property is becoming the top priority of the government as currently 74.8 percent of agricultural land and almost the entire transportation infrastructure—airports, ports, roads, and power plants—are still state-owned. Transport, energy, financial, and telecom infrastructures are the most promising areas for investments in Georgia. The successful development of the East-West energy corridor through the Caucasus, with BP-led Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project being in the core of this transportation network, is an additional stimulus for companies to become engaged in the region.

Among other attractive sectors are food processing, the wine industry, construction, and tourism. The countries of the former Soviet bloc still recognize and favor the brand names of Georgian wines, mineral water, and other beverages, as well as the tourist destinations in Georgia. The recent resolution of a difficult political situation in the key coastal region of Adjara will expedite the privatization of the land and state-owned tourist facilities at the beautiful Black Sea Riviera, which has the potential to become the major tourist destination for the growing market of middle-income travelers from Nordic and former Soviet states.

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GEORGIA: NEW BUSINESS continued from page 3

## U.S. Investments in Georgia

Despite all the hardships of business and political environment in previous years, the Georgian business community has several remarkable achievements of partnerships with U.S. businesses. The following are just some of the success stories that have resulted from U.S.-Georgian business cooperation: two **Marriott** hotels in Tbilisi, supported by an OPIC loan; leading cell phone operator Magticom, with U.S. **Metromedia Group** investments; the leading Georgian bank TBC Bank, with an equity share owned by OPIC-supported **Soros Capital Management**; and the leading Georgian dairy and juice producer Sante-Walsh Products, with majority U.S. ownership.

The key to the success of business initiatives and investments in Georgia lies in a clear understanding of the political context and business environment. The selection of the right local partners with Western business values and practices to serve as joint venture partners or representatives is another important element for success. Resources are available to help with these and other important steps, including the **America-Georgia Business Council**, which helps serve as a guide for U.S. investors in Georgia, actively facilitating business partnerships by providing access to state officials and the local business community. With the positive changes under way in Georgia, entering the market is becoming an easier challenge to meet.

*Mamuka Tsereteli is the executive director of the America-Georgia Business Council (www.agbdc.com) in Washington, DC.*

*For more information on Georgia, visit BISNIS online at <http://bisnis.doc.gov/georgia>.*

## Seventh Annual Conference "Long View of Georgia: Politics, Economy, Business"

### Second Business and Trade Mission to Georgia

October 7–9, 2004  
Tbilisi, Georgia

Organizer: **America-Georgia Business Council**

The conference will feature senior U.S. and Georgian government officials and business leaders, as well as experts on the region who will provide an in-depth analysis of the political, economic, and business trends, and potential directions of development.

The trade mission, which is scheduled to include meetings with President Saakashvili, Prime Minister Zhvania, and other top government officials, as well as leading Georgian businessmen, will provide participants with the opportunity to explore investment and trade opportunities, become better acquainted with government leaders and their policies, and enter into discussions with government and business leaders on specific issues.

*For more information, contact the America-Georgia Business Council at (202) 416-1606 or [agbdc@agbdc.com](mailto:agbdc@agbdc.com).*

## Resources on Georgia

### U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia

<http://georgia.usembassy.gov>

### Embassy of Georgia in the United States

[www.georgiaemb.org](http://www.georgiaemb.org)

### American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia

[www.amcham.ge](http://www.amcham.ge)

### Georgia Development Gateway

[www.georgia-gateway.org](http://www.georgia-gateway.org)

### ExpoGeorgia

[www.expo.com.ge](http://www.expo.com.ge)

### Legal Newsletter

Provides brief information on new laws and secondary legislation affecting the business and investment climates in Georgia.

Published monthly by the Mgaloblishvili, Kipiani, Dzidziguri (MKD) Law Firm  
[www.mkd-law.com](http://www.mkd-law.com)

### Caspian Investor Newsletter

Providing business intelligence on project developments, financing, politics, legislation, taxes, and transportation issues affecting each of the Caspian states.

Published 10 times a year by Research and Markets  
[www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c3013](http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c3013)

# Ukrainian Trade Shows: A Smart Way to Explore the Market

by Lyuda Horbatovska

The growing level of trade and investment in the former Soviet Union has provided U.S. companies with an important opportunity to develop business in this region. In particular, the exhibition industry of Ukraine is blooming, attracting numerous foreign exhibitors and, in turn, helping fulfill growing domestic demand for goods and new technologies. According to Valeriy Ponomarenko, general director of major Ukrainian exhibition company ExpoCenter, several dozen U.S. businesses displayed products at shows hosted by ExpoCenter in 2003, competing with local businesses as well as firms from England, France, Japan, Turkey, Russia, and others. The most popular industries among U.S. enterprises included automotive, extreme sports, health and spa, and displayed products ranged from recreational technologies to snowmobiles and motorcycles.

Although the environment in the region is challenging, Ukrainian industry experts stress that there are neither regulatory barriers nor political risks for U.S. companies to attend trade shows in Ukraine. Modern Ukrainian exhibition halls own customs terminals that result in improved clearance practices and exclude corrupt customs officials. These terminals make international deliveries of tradeshow materials substantially easier from a logistical standpoint. The fast-paced customs environment, favorable rates for booth space, available warehousing, agreeable terms of delivery and flexibility create huge potential growth opportunities for American businesses in the region. Generally characterized by low labor costs, well-developed infrastructure, and highly skilled staff, Ukrainian exhibitions offer a unique opportunity for U.S. firms to show their products or new technology and establish business partnerships in the region.

From our 12-year experience of providing global door-to-door shipping solutions for trade show industry, along with recent research and experience in the Ukrainian market, NorthStar Express can offer the following advice for U.S. companies thinking about attending shows in Ukraine:

- It's all about shopping. With consumer spending rapidly growing, Ukrainian professionals go to shows to find products, see new ideas, compare prices, check quality, find suppliers, and buy stuff! Though your primary agenda may be to get a

*continued on page 6*

## Major Trade Show Companies in Ukraine

### ExpoCenter of Ukraine

Kyiv—[www.expocenter.kiev.ua/eng/site.php](http://www.expocenter.kiev.ua/eng/site.php)

#### Major shows in late 2004 include:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Sept. 20–24     | Polygraphy 2004 (Printing equipment and machinery, technologies, materials) |
| Sept. 29–Oct. 3 | Security and Safety 2004  |
| Oct. 19–22      | IT& Wireless 2004   |

### The Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Kyiv—[www.ucci.org.ua](http://www.ucci.org.ua)

#### Major shows in late 2004 include:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Sept. 15–17 | CaBaRe. HOTEL (Equipment, furniture and accessories for cafes, bars, restaurants, night clubs, hotels, business centers, beauty salons and fitness centers) |
| Sept. 15–17 | Entertainment Industry  |
| Oct. 20–23  | Expohouse (consumer goods)  |

### Primus Ukraine

Kyiv—[www.primus.kiev.ua](http://www.primus.kiev.ua)

#### Major shows in late 2004 include:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Sept. 30–Oct. 4 | Wood processing /Furniture Industry                        |
| Oct. 12–15      | Household Goods and Housewares Exhibition                  |
| Nov. 17–21      | Building Ukraine (construction and construction materials) |

### EuroIndex

Kyiv—[www.euroindex.com.ua](http://www.euroindex.com.ua)

#### Major shows in late 2004 and 2005 include:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Sept. 14–17 | REX 2004 (Advertising, mass media, marketing services, PR) |
| Nov. 4–7    | DigiMania 2004 (personal and home digital technologies)    |
| Feb. 21–24  | EnterEX 2005 (corporate information systems)               |

BISNIS CUSTOMS SURVEY continued from page 1

2. The documents required during the customs clearance process are now specified, streamlining customs clearance procedures.
3. Customs officials are now obligated to process shipments in three days (rather than 10 days, as the case has been previously).
4. The importer now is able to choose the customs house to perform clearance. Under the new code, it is possible to either clear cargo at the border crossing point or the customs office at the destination point.
5. The new code allows for electronic versions of declarations and other documents that now can be submitted to Russian customs immediately after shipment or during internal transportation under customs supervision in Russia, which paves the way for advanced customs clearance process.
6. A new appeals procedure, a 34-month temporary import regime, and post-entry audits are also major improvements instituted in the current customs legislation.

*The complete customs clearance survey, which includes overviews of the customs systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, can be found at [http://bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/customs\\_report.cfm](http://bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/customs_report.cfm). Other customs information for Eurasia is available at BISNIS Customs Corner at <http://bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/customs.cfm>.*

**Please note:** All reports were based on information and legislation that was current as of the first quarter of 2004. As customs legislation and practices in all of these countries are subject to frequent changes, additional consultation is recommended in order to ensure consistency with customs requirements currently in effect.

Information regarding customs clearance processes and/or specific duty rates is provided by BISNIS for reference purposes only and should be verified with the customs authorities of the respective countries.

### Facilitating Trade with the Russian Federation: GOST-R Certification Seminar

October 7–8, 2004  
Las Vegas, Nevada

The objective of the seminar is to give U.S. exporters a better understanding of the Russian Federation certification process.

Organizer: **Russian Standard, Ltd.**

Web site: [www.rosstandard.com/seminar.htm](http://www.rosstandard.com/seminar.htm)

UKRAINIAN TRADE SHOWS continued from page 5

sense of the new market, to introduce your brand, promote your image—the visitor's agenda always includes shopping. Make sure you deliver a proper presentation of your product or service and be ready to discuss the terms of potential sales.

- Keep your exhibit simple. In most cases, you need a large display to compete on the floor, which inevitably increases your shipping costs. However, many Ukrainian exhibition halls offer a tabletop environment in which you can use a pop-up trade show exhibit, an easy and simple way to display the graphic images of your products. If you prefer to display an actual product that is heavy, you should go with a panel system for your booth. It gives you more flexibility in terms of the structure and the shape attracting visitor's attention to the best features of the product. Bear in mind that national colors are golden-yellow and blue that date back to the 16th century symbolizing blue sky and fields of golden wheat. These colors may have a positive impact on Ukrainian target audience. Ukrainians have an individualistic culture, so a powerful image of an individual using your product or service will enhance the attention-getting ability of your booth. Although more Ukrainian professionals than ever speak English, we strongly recommend preparation of bilingual English-Ukrainian (or Russian) brochures and data sheets for people who are interested in details.

- Close personal relationships with decision-makers is the key to develop business in the region. Take this into account when developing your trade show marketing plan, setting up your exhibiting goals, and training your sales team to go to the show in Ukraine. We recommend that you rely on an established group that can make you successful by sharing its personal connections and knowledge of the economic, political, and cultural context of the market. However, it is a good idea to remain an active player, even after you have found a partner.

- Turn your trade show into a FUNvention! Remember that humor won't help you to solve international trade problems, but will definitely help you overcome cross-cultural communication barriers.

*Lyuda Horbatovska works for Virginia-based NorthStar Express Freight ([www.northstarexpress.com](http://www.northstarexpress.com)), a trade show pro. She has recently reached a partnership agreement with ExpoCenter of Ukraine. In 2004, NorthStar Express is ready to serve the following vertical markets of Ukrainian trade show industry: publishing, packaging, fire protection, textile, energy resources, machine building, food processing, chemistry, rubber production, agriculture, bakery, and fitness. For more information, email [lhobotovska@northstarexpress.com](mailto:lhobotovska@northstarexpress.com).*

*For more information on Ukraine, visit BISNIS Online at <http://bisnis.doc.gov/ukraine>.*

## BISNIS Interview: New OPIC Office Assists Small Business Investing

*BISNIS trade specialist Chris Christov talked with John Aldonas, director of the Small Business Center (SBC) at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), about how the SBC can assist U.S. companies seeking to invest in Eurasia. OPIC ([www.opic.gov](http://www.opic.gov)) is a U.S. government development agency that provides political risk insurance to help U.S. companies manage risk, provides financing through direct loans and loan guaranties, and leverages private capital through OPIC-supported funds. OPIC's SBC is open for development of projects in all former Soviet republics, except Belarus.*

### What is OPIC's Small Business Center and why was it created?

The OPIC Small Business Center, or SBC, was formed in 2003 to facilitate investments made by U.S. small businesses in overseas markets. It offers qualified small businesses the opportunity to utilize OPIC products with improved OPIC customer service, flexible coverage, and easier access through a streamlined approval process.

OPIC established the SBC because it recognizes that small businesses looking to participate in the global marketplace face unique challenges—limited financial and human resources to pursue opportunities abroad, concerns over political risks in foreign countries, and the inability to find private sector support. These concerns often prevent U.S. small businesses from expanding overseas, which in turn prevents them from both generating jobs at home and overseas and from competing with their foreign counterparts. The SBC helps U.S. small businesses tackle these challenges.

### What are the main SBC products and services?

The SBC offers financing in the form of loans ranging from \$100,000 to \$10 million, with terms generally ranging from three-to-ten years. Loan documentation and collateral arrangements have been streamlined under the SBC. Interest rates range from four-to-six percent above OPIC's cost of funds for comparable maturities. In addition, there is a one-time facility fee of up to two percent of the loan and an annual maintenance fee not to exceed one percent of the outstanding balance of the loan. The eligible U.S. small businesses must own at least 25 percent of the overseas project, but OPIC's SBC may be able to finance a higher

share of overall project costs—up to 65 percent—with sponsor equity investment covering the balance with equity.

The SBC also provides political risk insurance for the U.S. equity investment against loss or damage resulting from political violence, such as terrorism or war, nationalization, or expropriation by a foreign government, or the inability to convert local currency and repatriate profits. Businesses receiving SBC loans can utilize OPIC's insurance "wrap," which provides insurance at a reduced rate and a greatly streamlined underwriting process. The SBC loan borrower may elect this coverage for up to \$6 million of their equity investments. Pricing is based on a one-time fee for the life of the OPIC loan.

### What are the eligibility criteria and who can take advantage of SBC?

Any U.S. business (that is, more than 50 percent-owned by U.S. citizens) with annual revenues of less than \$35 million is eligible for SBC programs. For businesses with annual revenues higher than \$35 million and under \$250 million, OPIC's regular small business programs are available.

### How does a U.S. company get started?

For SBC financing, a qualifying U.S. small business needs to submit a completed finance application, a business plan with financial projections based on reasonable assumptions, and sponsor disclosure forms. It need not submit additional information for the insurance "wrap." The approval process should take just 60 days from the time of submission of the necessary documents.

*For more information, visit OPIC's website at [www.opic.gov](http://www.opic.gov) and click on OPIC and U.S. Small Business, or telephone 800-CALLSBC (800-225-5722).*

### International Congress Eurasian Economic Community— Business America

September 21–22, 2004  
Moscow, Russia

#### Organizers:

- EURASEC Integration Committee
- "Eurasian Economic Community Business Council" Association
- Russian-American Business Club
- National Agency for Foreign Investment
- Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Industrialists & Entrepreneurs Union of Russia

Website: <http://dm.evrazes.org>

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## **Fifth Russian Venture Fair**

### **October 7–8, 2004**

### **St. Petersburg, Russia**

Organizers: **The Russian Ministry of Education and Science** and the **Russian Venture Capital Association**

The 5th Venture Fair will feature projects of about 100 companies, screened by experts, seeking venture capital investors. Taking part in this year's Fair will be representatives of more than 150 Russian and foreign venture capital and private equity funds, leading experts of banks and investment companies, as well as major legal and consulting companies, officials of various ministries and government agencies, Federal District and regional administration executives, State Duma deputies, members of the Federation Council, and representatives of all national Venture Capital Associations.

Web site: [www.rvf.ru](http://www.rvf.ru)

#### **Trade Events Calendar**

<b>All-Siberian Innovation Forum</b>	<b>October 6–8, 2004</b>	<b>Tomsk</b>
Organizer:	Tomsk International Business Center "Technopark"	
Web site:	<a href="http://www.t-park.ru">www.t-park.ru</a>	
<b>MITEL 2004</b>	<b>October 6–9, 2004</b>	<b>Moscow</b>
Organizer:	BEM Exhibitions & Conferences	
Web site:	<a href="http://www.bemltd.com">www.bemltd.com</a>	
Sectors:	Telecom, computers and IT	
<b>Printing &amp; Packaging, Advertising &amp; Media</b>	<b>October 7–10, 2004</b>	<b>Tbilisi</b>
Organizer:	ITE Group Plc and Iteca Caspian Ltd	
Web site:	<a href="http://www.caspianworld.com">www.caspianworld.com</a>	
<b>Interles/Paper/Wood Construction</b>	<b>October 12–15, 2004</b>	<b>St. Petersburg</b>
Organizer:	Restec	
Web site:	<a href="http://www.restec.ru">www.restec.ru</a>	
Sectors:	Technologies and machinery for forestry, logging and wood processing, timber, paper and paperboard	
<b>MoldAgroTech</b>	<b>October 27–31, 2004</b>	<b>Chisinau</b>
Organizer:	MoldExpo	
Web site:	<a href="http://www.moldexpo.md">www.moldexpo.md</a>	
Sectors:	Equipment, technologies, and materials for all branches of agriculture	

This notice is provided solely as an informational resource and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Commerce. For a complete listing of Eurasia trade events, visit <http://bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/events.cfm>.