

Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE)

Profile of the ABCDE conference

Designed to expand the flow of ideas between thinkers, practitioners and policy-makers within the field of international development, the ABCDE provides a forum for discussion on key international development issues. The conference brings together academics (about 60% of audience), policy makers, representatives of multilateral and bilateral agencies, research institutes, civil society organizations, students and journalists, and thus provides an excellent opportunity to foster exchange of knowledge and understanding of development issues. The ABCDE each time brings together between 500 and 800 participants: approx. 30% from the host country, 30% from the region and 30% from the rest of the world.

Previous editions

The concept of the ABCDE was developed by the World Bank in 1988 and the first conference was held at World Bank headquarters in Washington D.C in the same year. Since 2003, the World Bank was organizing two ABCDE conferences every year, one global ABCDE - the previous one was held in Slovenia, in May 2007 - and a regional ABCDE - the previous was held in Beijing, China in January 2007. In the year 2008 the regional and the global conference will be merged into one event.

Previous editions of the ABCDE were a resounding success. In 2006 the ABCDE was for the first time held in East Asia (Tokyo). With close to 900 participants coming from 100 countries, it marked the attendance record for all ABCDE conferences. The overall theme of the conference was 'Rethinking Infrastructure for Development'. It addressed several major topics related to infrastructure: growth, climate change, energy efficiency, rural development, agriculture and the implications for regional cooperation. In 2007, the ABCDE went back to Europe (Slovenia), putting a particular emphasis on 'Private Sector and Development'. It covered themes such as: financial inclusion, business climate, provision of public services by non-state actors. ABCDE 2007 offered a special role to the private sector, by bringing in the debate private sector representatives in order to share lessons learnt and new opportunities of development and poverty eradication through private sector investment. ABCDE Slovenia also provided an opportunity to discuss EU-related issues and the emergence of new donors in Eastern and Central Europe.

Over the past few years, the conference has been closely linked to the international agenda, offering a platform of exchange and contributing ideas on the G8 Summit, the European Union Presidency and other global events.

ABCDE 2008, June 9-11, Cape Town, South Africa

“People, Politics and Globalization”



The 2008 conference will be focused on three broad themes:

- Globalization, Investment and Growth
- Human Development for Equitable Growth
- Political Economy of Shared Growth

ABCDE Cape Town will feature keynote speakers and plenary roundtables, as well as parallel sessions:

Comparative Sessions: five academically-oriented sessions relating to **global, African, or South Asian** experience.

1. Trade and Investment

Organizer: Tony Venables, Oxford University / DFID

2. Migration, Remittances, and the Transition from Foreign Aid

Organizer: Jean-Paul Azam, University of Toulouse

3. Higher Education and High-tech Industry

Organizer: Devesh Kapur, University of Pennsylvania

4. Human Development

Organizer: Paul Schultz, Yale University

5. Political Economy of Shared Growth

Organizer: Robert Bates, Harvard University

Specific Sessions: 12 specific sessions focusing on the three general topics: **globalization, human development, and political economy**. This will enable these topics to be considered from a number of specific perspectives – social, business, etc. Two specific sessions will take place concurrently with each (of the five) comparative sessions. The specific sessions will be organized by international financial organizations, NGOs, and the South African academic community.

Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, has confirmed his participation as a keynote speaker at the conference. **Michael Spence**, Chairman, Commission on Growth and Development, is also confirmed as a keynote speaker.

Side events

The ABCDE 2008 will serve as a convening point for several ‘side events’ including:

- The **Annual Meeting of the Researchers Alliance for Development (RAD)**. The RAD is an informal, action-oriented, multidisciplinary network of researchers and academics that provides a platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas on international development. The RAD currently comprises more than 700 representatives of academic institutions, research centers, as well as research units in NGOs, bilateral agencies, the private sector and trade unions from all over the world. Its main objective is twofold:

- Facilitating interaction between the academic community and the World Bank;*
 - *Mobilizing the academic and student community on development issues and curricula, facilitating mutual flow of knowledge.*

- The award ceremony for the fourth **World Bank International Essay Competition 2008** organized in partnership with more than 13 academic, civil society/youth organizations worldwide and is co-financed by the Government of Norway. This year’s competition invites young people from all over the world to submit proposals on how youth can shape the city of their dreams.

<http://www.essaycompetition.org>

- **Fourth PhD Workshop on the World Bank and the role of international organizations in development**

Academics all over the world study and produce research work related to World Bank's policies and operations. However, the findings of their work often do not receive due recognition. Similarly, the World Bank does not profit from the conclusions reached by external researchers. In order to close this gap, the "Research Bank on the World Bank" project was initiated. Since 2005, three workshops were held, offering a total of approx. 100 PhD researchers whose main area of study is the World Bank, an opportunity to share their work and discuss it with relevant Bank experts.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Kingdom and the WTO have expressed interest in co-sponsoring this event, which will for the first time also include a discussion of other organizations: WTO and regional development banks.

As in previous years, the host government will finance the attendance of about 20 young researchers, policy-makers, media and civil society representatives from developing countries.