



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

Safety at the heart of the Inland Transport Committee session

The Inland Transport Committee held its 65th session from 18-20 February. It considered a wide range of transport infrastructure, safety, environmental and economic questions concerning road, rail, inland water and combined transport. In particular, the Committee examined amendments to a number of the international agreements and conventions developed under UNECE auspices. These concerned the extension of the E rail network to Caucasus and Central Asian countries, the introduction of a digital tachograph in commercial vehicles engaged in international transport in order to better control the driving and rest periods of their crews, improvements in the safety and environmental performance of motor vehicles and other measures to reduce the risk of road accidents, including the prohibition of the use of handheld mobile phones while driving and the reduction of the limit of alcohol in blood for drivers. The Committee adopted two resolutions: No. 251 on the Fourth Road Safety Week in the UNECE Region (5-11 April 2004) and No. 252 on implementation of the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN).

Senior Officials of “Environment for Europe” meet

Preparations are intensifying for the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, 21-23 May). Chairing the fifth and most recent meeting of the Working Group (19-21 February), the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Ukraine, H.E. Vasyl Shevchuk, stressed the need to proceed with negotiations on a number of critical issues, including the draft Ministerial Declaration, proposals on the “Future” of the EfE process, a Pan-European Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and energy efficiency. Documents that were approved for the Ministerial Conference during the meeting cover issues ranging from a 10-year review of UNECE’s Environmental Performance Review Programme, to guidelines for energy pricing and energy subsidies (the result of joint work between UNECE’s environment and energy Divisions), an initiative from Central Asia on water, environment and security, and a regional strategy on education for sustainable development.

The next meeting of the Working Group (3-4 April, in Geneva) will continue negotiations on the outstanding items. Information related to the Kiev Conference and the Working Group of Senior Officials is available on the Web, at <http://www.unece.org/env/wgso/>

CD-ROM on “New Energy Security Threats”

Attacks on oil tankers and terrorist operations against the background of growing tensions in Iraq, the Middle East and other parts of the world pose mounting threats to the security of energy supplies for both rich countries and the developing world. While the Security Council seeks to reconcile political positions, the UNECE through this CD-ROM (No. 19 in the UNECE Energy Series) examines the economic and social consequences of possible New Energy Security Threats. Explanations from a wide range of high-level sources are provided about the key energy security problems faced by policy makers, the energy industry and global financial markets. The political, economic, social, financial and technological problems, barriers and opportunities for managing the secure flow of energy supplies are described in written and PowerPoint presentations as well as in video responses to press conference questions answered by leading authorities in the field. Crucial insights are offered on the needs of the financial markets to understand the possible implications for energy security arising from a possible conflict in Iraq.

Available from United Nations bookshops; Sales No. G.V.E.03.08, ISBN 92-1-101053-5, ISSN 1014-7225. Price US\$ 45.

Not an official record - For information only

A statistical side-event to the World Summit on Information Society

At a meeting of UNECE statisticians on 26 February, it was decided that a Workshop on Statistics for Monitoring the Information Society will be organized on 8 and 9 December 2003 in Geneva, back-to-back with the World Summit on the Information Society. The Steering Group for such an event, consisting of the UNECE Statistical Division (chair), Eurostat, OECD, ITU, UNCTAD, UNESCO Institute of Statistics and the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, discussed the programme and organization of the event. The World Bank will also assist in its preparation. The Workshop, which will be chaired by the Director-General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Ms.Bürgi-Schmelz, will consider how statistics can measure the impact of information and communication technologies on households, businesses and governments.

Agreement reached on civil liability

Negotiations on a legally binding instrument on civil liability and compensation for damage caused by the transboundary effects of major industrial accidents involving hazardous substances on transboundary waters came to a successful conclusion in Geneva yesterday. The instrument, which fills one of the major gaps in international environmental legislation, was developed as a protocol to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. Under the Protocol, individuals affected by the transboundary impact of industrial accidents on international watercourses, e.g. fishermen or downstream waterworks, are given a legal claim to compensation. In addition, operators of industrial installations, including tailing dams, and pipelines, will be liable for damage depending on the risk they pose, i.e. the quantities of hazardous substances present and their toxicity; to cover this liability, companies will have to establish financial securities, such as insurance or other guarantees. It is expected that the Protocol will draw the attention of operators to the need to minimize risk and prevent damage for which they will henceforth be liable; it will thus help to prevent industrial accidents from happening in the first place and limit their adverse effects on people and the environment. The Protocol is expected to be formally adopted and signed at the forthcoming Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Kiev, Ukraine, on 21 May 2003.

Coming up soon ...

3 March	Spring Seminar on Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region
4-6 March	Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Europe
5 March	Gunnar Myrdal Lecture by Professor Douglass C. North, 1993 Nobel Laureate in Economics, on "The Role of Institutions in Economic Development"

Facts and figures:

Energy trends in the UNECE region

selected UNECE countries

Country	Energy intensity			Energy consumption per capita		
	1995	2000	change (%)	1995	2000	change (%)
Poland	0.221	0.150	-31.8%	1.641	1.437	-12.4%
Estonia	0.264	0.185	-29.8%	1.785	1.695	-5.0%
Latvia	0.211	0.154	-26.9%	1.082	1.064	-1.7%
Lithuania	0.192	0.142	-25.9%	1.127	0.988	-12.3%
Bulgaria	0.230	0.178	-22.4%	1.355	1.067	-21.2%
Slovakia	0.187	0.150	-19.8%	1.819	1.743	-4.2%
Luxembourg	0.206	0.168	-18.8%	7.685	8.114	5.6%
Ireland	0.116	0.097	-16.7%	2.169	2.733	26.0%
Sweden	0.170	0.142	-16.3%	3.800	3.725	-2.0%
Hungary	0.150	0.128	-14.2%	1.469	1.572	7.0%
Finland	0.215	0.186	-13.5%	4.321	4.744	9.8%
Czech Republic	0.190	0.165	-13.3%	2.531	2.344	-7.4%
Denmark	0.108	0.094	-13.3%	2.817	2.735	-2.9%
Netherlands	0.131	0.114	-12.5%	3.066	3.138	2.3%
Germany	0.113	0.100	-11.7%	2.710	2.607	-3.8%

Source: UNECE Statistical Division estimates (data on energy use are from the Eurostat's New Cronos database, GDPs are estimated by using data from various international and national sources, population values are from the United Nations Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision", New York)

Notes:

- Energy intensity is defined as the ratio between the final energy consumption, expressed in KTOE (Kilo Tonnes of Oil Equivalent), and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant (2000) prices, expressed in millions of US Dollars (PPPs).
- Energy consumption is defined as the ratio between the final energy consumption, expressed in TOE (Tonnes of Oil Equivalent), and the total population.
- Countries were selected and sorted on the basis of the highest reductions in energy intensity between 1995 and 2000.

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