



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

UNECE Special Session on National Accounts for Economies in Transition

On 10 October 2003, the UNECE Statistical Division organized a workshop on National Accounts for Economies in Transition, back-to-back with the OECD Meeting of National Accounts Experts in Paris. The workshop focused on how to solve the main problems concerning the production of early, or “flash” estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and how to allocate the output of financial institutions among the different institutional sectors of the economy. As there is significant pressure to release economic data as soon as possible after the end of the reference period, the National Statistical Offices have to make a trade-off

between timeliness and quality. The “flash” estimates are based on incomplete data and various techniques are used to fill in the gaps. Transition economies often face additional problems as users may be intolerant or unfamiliar with the practice of revising data. Also, the statisticians compiling the data are still gaining expertise in extrapolation methods and making assumptions about growth. The workshop gave rise to a lively and productive discussion helping to find solutions to these problems in future. For further information contact Lidia Bratanova (lidia.bratanova@unece.org).

Genetically modified organisms and the role of the public

The Aarhus Convention Working Group on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) which held its 2nd meeting last week, has become the forum for an intense debate over the extent to which the public should have rights to participate in decision-making on GMOs. Whereas the Convention requires Parties to apply a set of public participation procedures to a range of other environmentally significant activities, these procedures are only required to be applied to GMO activities “to the extent feasible and appropriate”. The ambiguity in this provision has given rise to a long-running debate that started even while the Convention was being adopted in June 1998. The Working Group is charged with the task of exploring and developing options for addressing the issue



through a legally binding approach. Delegations to the Working Group appear to be divided into two fairly distinct blocs: EU and some accession countries have only just begun to implement recently introduced changes in EU legislation on GMOs and tend to be reluctant to commit themselves to further changes at this stage. Countries with economies in transition are generally in favour of introducing an amendment to the Convention which would lay down binding procedures allowing the public to participate in GMO decision-making. While some progress was made at the meeting, the gap between these viewpoints remains wide. For further information contact Jeremy Wates (jeremy.wates@unece.org).

Progress made on collecting better Emission Data under the Air Convention

The Task Force on Emission Inventories and Projections under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution continued to make progress toward obtaining more timely, comprehensive and reliable data on air emissions from industrial and other sources. Emission reporting is an important part of Parties' obligations under the Air Convention and crucial for determining compliance. The Task Force met in Warsaw from 22-24 September, in conjunction with a Workshop organized by the European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET), maintained by the European Environment Agency (EEA). The Task Force was especially keen to consider the results of the 2003 round of emission reporting, as this was the first time that Parties to the

Convention would have a chance to report according to new Guidelines harmonized with those of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. By using comparable systems, the reporting mechanisms under the two Conventions can reduce the response burden of Parties who must report to both the Air Pollution Convention and the Climate Change Convention. Now that much progress has been made on helping Parties to report according to uniform definitions and harmonized source categories, the Task Force will target future efforts toward reviewing the quality of the data and identifying trouble-spots with the aim of building high quality emission inventories. For more information contact Brinda Wachs: (brinda.wachs@unece.org)

New air pollution initiatives in EECCA countries

The Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution is extending its activities in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). A meeting on air emission inventories, atmospheric air pollution monitoring and modelling was held in Almaty 8-10 October. Most of the new EECCA Parties to the Convention (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova) participated in the meetings, as did Uzbekistan and Tajikistan who are preparing for accession. The meeting's main objective was to present and discuss a national report from

Kazakhstan on air pollution inventories, monitoring and modelling, and to develop recommendations for Kazakhstan and other EECCA countries to strengthen their capacity to comply with data collection and reporting obligations under the Convention. UNECE in collaboration with Central Asian States is planning additional activities during 2004. The specific objective of one planned project is to link activities aimed at decreasing air pollution in the energy sector with further work on air quality management under the Convention.

Coming up soon ...

The Committee on Environmental Policy will hold its 10th session on 20-22 October 2003. The Committee will notably discuss the strategic directions that it should take in its future work for the environment, taking into account the tasks emanating from the Kiev Ministerial Conference and the World Summit on Sustainable Development – as well as the ongoing economic and political changes in the ECE region. An informal round table discussion will be held on "The environment in a changing region" where views will be shared on the changes in the region with regard to the enlargement of the European Union and an assessment made of the environmental implications.

20-21 October	UNCTAD/UNECE High Level Regional Conference for Transition Economies "ICT and E-Commerce Strategies for Development"
20-22 October	Committee on Environmental Policy
20-22 October	Work Session on Statistical Data Editing (Madrid, Spain)
21-24 October	Working Party on Rail Transport
21-24 October	Working Party on General Safety Provisions
22(pm) October	Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials "Environment for Europe"
23-24 October	Working Group of Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Facts and figures:

UNECE initiating dialogue on Energy Security Risks and Global Financial Markets

Energy security is emerging as a crucial issue for policy makers, energy industries and the general public. One of the key issues related to energy security is its impact on the global financial sector and investments in the energy sector. On 20 November in Geneva, the Committee on Sustainable Energy, as part of its Energy Security Forum, is initiating a dialogue among senior executives from major oil and natural gas companies, energy producers, and leading financial institutions to review energy security risks, financial market reactions and potential energy policy responses. The Committee will have the opportunity to discuss energy security risks and decide on how its dialogue with the global financial institutions may develop further. Full details of the event and speakers, who include H.E. Mr. Alvaro Silva-Calderon, OPEC Secretary-General, are available at:

<http://www.unece.org/ie/se/comnov.html>

For further information contact Sead Vilogorac (sead.vilogorac@unece.org).

Real GDP growth in selected Western economies

(changes over the previous period, annualised)

	2000	2001	2002	2002		2003	
				Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
France	3.8	2.1	1.2	1.1	-0.5	0.7	-1.3
Germany	2.9	0.6	0.2	0.6	-0.2	-1.0	-0.2
Italy	3.1	1.8	0.4	1.5	1.1	-0.8	-0.4
Austria	3.5	0.7	1.0	0.5	1.3	0.1	1.0
Belgium	3.7	0.8	0.7	1.8	1.2	0.7	...
Finland	5.1	1.2	2.2	1.7	2.1	-3.0	2.4
Greece	4.2	4.1	4.0	5.4	-1.2	12.2	1.7
Netherlands	3.3	1.3	0.2	0.4	-0.8	-1.1	-2.1
Portugal	3.7	1.6	0.4	-7.6	-2.3	0.5	0.5
Spain	4.2	2.7	2.0	2.7	1.7	2.1	2.7
Euro area	3.5	1.6	0.8	0.9	0.2	0.1	-0.3
United Kingdom	3.1	2.1	1.9	3.7	2.0	0.4	1.4
Denmark	2.9	1.4	1.6	-2.1	0.2	1.8	-1.8
Sweden	4.4	1.1	1.9	1.2	1.4	2.0	1.2
European Union	3.5	1.6	1.0	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.0
Norway	2.8	1.9	1.0	-5.8	-0.6	-0.8	-0.6
Switzerland	3.2	0.9	0.2	1.0	-1.0	-2.3	-1.2
Canada	5.3	1.9	3.3	2.7	1.6	2.6	-0.3
United States	3.8	0.3	2.4	4.0	1.4	1.4	3.1

Source: Eurostat, New Cronos Database; OECD National accounts (Paris), various issues; National Statistical Offices

Notes: Quarterly data are seasonally adjusted.

For further information please contact:

Information Service, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41(0)22 917 44 44 Fax: +41(0)22 917 05 05;

E-mail: info.ece@unece.org Web site: <http://www.unece.org>

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