



# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 46 – 15-19 December 2003

## *It's just happened ...*

### **UNECE Promotes the Regional Dimension of the Information Society**

UNECE was active in all stages of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (10-12 December) and promoted the importance of regional actions in developing a global Information Society. The Executive Secretary of UNECE, Mrs. Schmögnerová, addressed the WSIS on 10 December and drew attention to the special problems facing many less-advantaged countries in the region, emphasizing that the digital divide is a real issue for many of them, not only for developing countries. She also participated actively in high-level Round Table 3 which discussed the use of ICT to



achieve the Millennium Development Goals. At the Round Table, Mrs. Schmögnerová emphasized the need for more effective monitoring and assessment

of national e-strategies, which should be well integrated within overall economic development strategies, and she made the innovative proposal that an agreed proportion of aid could perhaps be reserved to support projects to follow up on and implement the conclusions of the WSIS. UNECE provided the secretariat to this high-level Round Table.

UNECE, together with other regional commissions, UNDP, UNCTAD, UN ICT Task Force and World Bank, organized four very successful panel discussions on “National Strategies for the Information Society and the Role of Regional and Global Organizations”. Each panel brought together high-level speakers from throughout the world, Ministers as well as representatives of business, the civil society and international organizations. These panel discussions were attended by several hundred participants. The Information Society Team

at UNECE played an active part in many of the WSIS events, coordinated the participation of the regional commissions with the WSIS Executive Secretariat and liaised with the ITU. Working together, the regional commissions achieved a good level of recognition throughout the Summit and ensured that the regional dimension of the Information Society would be emphasized in planning the road from Geneva to Tunis, where the second phase of the WSIS will be held in 2005.

For more information contact Carol Cosgrove-Sacks ([carol.cosgrove-sacks@unece.org](mailto:carol.cosgrove-sacks@unece.org))

### **Monitoring the Information Society**

The joint UNECE/UNCTAD/UIS/ITU/OECD/Eurostat Statistical Workshop on Monitoring the Information Society: Data, Measurement and Methods was held in Geneva on 8-9 December. It was attended by over 60 countries and several international organizations. The Workshop recommended that the five United Nations regional commissions should, in cooperation with competent regional

organizations, commit themselves to organizing, within each region, an ICT related meeting in 2004 on the issue of monitoring the information society. These meetings are intended to provide input for a global summary meeting in early 2005 in order to prepare an action plan for the next WSIS Summit in Tunis.

For more information, contact Jan Karlsson ([jan.karlsson@unece.org](mailto:jan.karlsson@unece.org))

## Environmental democracy discussed at the WSIS



A seminar on “Environmental democracy”, organized by UNECE on 10 December at the WSIS, showcased best practices in the use of electronic information tools to strengthen the environmental rights of citizens and promote good e-governance in the field of the environment. It also showed how governments and organizations are working to bridge the digital divide by supporting the development of environmental information systems in the less economically developed parts of the UNECE region. Examples of the cutting-edge uses of information technology to promote government transparency and accountability and to empower citizens included: *Scorecard* ([www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org)) – a Web-based information service made available by the NGO Environmental Defense to provide comprehensive information about pollution trends

and toxic releases across the United States; *What’s In Your Backyard?* ([http://216.31.193.171/asp/1\\_introduction.asp](http://216.31.193.171/asp/1_introduction.asp)) – the United Kingdom Environment Agency’s pollution inventory that enables citizens to find out in-depth information on the release of various substances in their neighbourhoods; ‘*Decide Today*’ ([www.tom.riik.ee](http://www.tom.riik.ee)) – an e-government tool that enables the public in Estonia to send comments in the legislative process and actively participate in decision-making.

Mrs. Brigita Schmögnerová, UNECE Executive Secretary, who chaired the event, commented on the way that technological progress had affected environmental governance: “Electronic information tools can enable us to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation of all citizens in all countries and broadening our joint quest for sustainable development”. The event had shown “how different communities from across the UNECE region are pursuing this goal”.

For more information contact: Jeremy Wates ([jeremy.wates@unece.org](mailto:jeremy.wates@unece.org))

## Facts and figures:

### Balance of current account, millions of US dollars

*selected UNECE economies*

				2003	
	2000	2001	2002	Q1	Q2
France	16313.6	21261.3	27176.4	3900.2	5486.4
Germany	-25753.2	3747.9	59189.5	11701.6	9030.3
Italy	-5810.9	-662.5	-6896.6	-4786.9	-8818.4
Austria	-4937.8	-3700.4	704.0	-582.8	98.0
Belgium	9011.1	8715.5	11287.7	2690.3	3735.6
Finland	9073.8	8667.1	10028.6	1999.1	2524.9
Greece <sup>1</sup>	-7814.0	-7238.8	-8592.2	-3506.7	-2852.6
Ireland <sup>1</sup>	-356.0	-691.7	-916.7	-1115.4	-441.9
Luxembourg	2680.8	1769.6	1733.2	629.0	594.8
Netherlands	7653.6	8060.8	5836.6	635.5	...
Portugal	-11060.1	-10419.9	-8728.5	-1792.2	-2035.9
Spain	-19345.0	-16429.8	-15669.8	-4812.9	-4449.0
United Kingdom	-29578.8	-25980.4	-28452.5	-3717.1	-13937.4
Denmark	2303.0	4862.9	3498.0	1040.4	1922.1
Sweden	9442.6	8531.3	10009.2	3285.0	4162.6
Iceland	-851.3	-311.4	-26.6	-14.6	-191.9
Norway	24969.4	25952.0	25122.7	7731.8	6307.1
Switzerland	31685.6	21470.8	24799.3	6989.5	9273.5
Turkey	-9819.0	3390.0	-1473.0	-2307.3	-1691.3
Canada	20680.6	17349.4	14882.4	4689.7	3619.8
United States	-411460.0	-393750.0	-480860.0	-138710.0	-138670.0

Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators*, latest issues.

Notes: Quarterly values are seasonally adjusted.

1/ Values are not seasonally adjusted.

## Coming up soon ...

15(pm)-18 December

Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

**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](mailto:info.ece@unece.org),  
Web site: <http://www.unece.org>**