



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 49 – 5-9 January 2004

It's just happened ...

UNECE promotes regional cooperation on Gender and ICT

At the side-event "From Bucharest to Tunis: regional cooperation on gender and ICT in Eastern Europe and CIS countries", organized by UNECE at World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS -10-12 December 2003), international agencies, representatives of governments and NGOs discussed how to strengthen regional cooperation in the area of gender and ICT. The event was a follow up to the recommendations of the Regional Preparatory Conference to WSIS held in Bucharest,

and aimed to identify areas of joint projects in the perspective of WSIS Tunis. It was agreed that joint projects would be developed in the following areas: (i) methodologies and data improvement; (ii) research and analysis (iii) exchange of good practices and (iv) policy dialogue. The UNECE will play an active role in all areas.

For more information contact Ewa Ruminska-Zimny (zimny.ruminska@unece.org)

Coming up soon ...

European Population Forum 2004

UNECE, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as co-organizer, and the Swiss Government as host, will convene an expert meeting – the European Population Forum (EPF) 2004 – on 12-14 January 2004. The Forum will, inter alia, consider important, newly emerging population changes, examine challenges they pose and identify best policy responses to them. In this context, the Forum will examine the implementation of the ICPD-related regional and global agreements of the 1990s in the UNECE region, particularly in countries in transition. It will also consider how the UNECE

region can further the implementation of these agreements in the future. In brief, the Forum will contribute to a continuing debate on population issues in the UNECE region. The Forum will bring together noted experts from executive and legislative branches of government, academia, research, intergovernmental organizations and institutions, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

For more information contact Alphonse MacDonald (alphonse.macdonald@unece.org)

Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development

UNECE will hold the First Regional Implementation Forum on 15 and 16 January 2004. This is in line with the decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its eleventh session in May 2003 relating to its future programme and methods of work, including enhancing the role of regional and sub-regional inputs to the CSD process. The Commission will now function on the basis of *two-year "Implementation Cycles"*, including Review and Policy Years. The Review Year will evaluate progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identifying obstacles and

constraints, while the Policy Year will decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome these obstacles and constraints. It was agreed that for the first two-year cycle (2004-2005), the CSD would focus on water, sanitation and human settlements. The First Regional Implementation Forum will provide substantial inputs to the Review Year and contribute to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, scheduled for 16-30 April 2004.

For more information contact Mary Pat Silveira (mary.pat.silveira@unece.org)

Off the press ...



Energy pricing and subsidy reforms have become primary issues for discussion in the UNECE region. Energy pricing has a crucial impact on the success of reforms and on investment in the energy sector, and has an important effect on household disposable incomes and the spill over effects on industry and

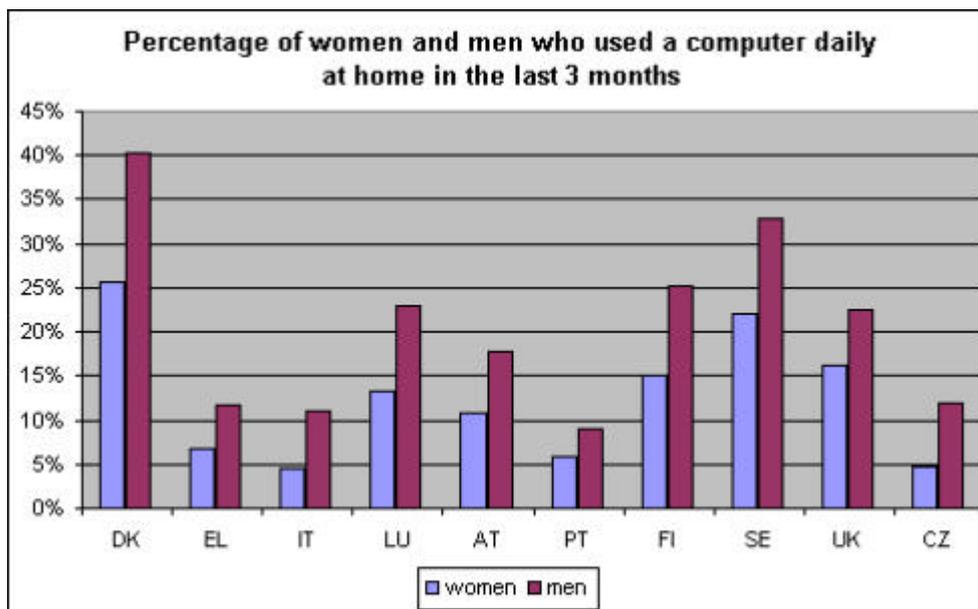
agriculture where energy is an important component. Energy subsidies are often used to promote specific policy objectives, such as encouraging domestic production or lowering the cost of energy to households. However they often fail to meet their intended objectives, i.e. either to correct market imperfections or to meet social objectives, such as to protect the most vulnerable

groups in society. It is clear that subsidies keep energy prices below economic levels, contribute to environmental degradation and contribute to inappropriate depletion of natural resources. Removing subsidies is an acute political problem for governments, especially in UNECE transition economies, where social safety nets are weak or non-existent.

This booklet draws general guidelines to be used by policy makers when reforming national energy pricing and subsidy schemes. The Guidelines suggest the best policy options as well as measures to alleviate the full impact of higher energy prices on those least able to absorb them. They also suggest policy measures and related tools for flexible energy price adjustments and removal of harmful subsidies.

For more information contact Mikhail Kokine (mikhail.kokine@unece.org) or Slav Slavov (slav.slavov@unece.org)

Facts and figures:



Source: Eurostat, selected data from 2002 Eurostat Pilot Survey on ICT Usage in Households.

Notes: Data for Denmark refer to the last month only.

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>