



# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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## SIXTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE 21-23 February, Palais des Nations, Conference Room XVIII

*Economic Commission for Europe  
Commission économique pour l'Europe  
Европейская Экономическая Комиссия*

At their annual session UNECE member States will decide on ways and means to implement the reform which they adopted last December.

“The UNECE is placed in the middle of three major political and economic processes: globalization of economy and trade, increasing European integration around the European Union and the reform of the United Nations. In order to adapt the UNECE to those three challenges, member States have put in place a reform process” says Mr. Marek Belka, the new Executive Secretary of the UNECE.

The High-level Policy Segment of the session will review the UNECE Reform and discuss its

implementation. A panel of experts and a general discussion among member States representatives should enable the process to be pursued and lead to its implementation by the beginning of April 2006.

The session's General Segment will discuss the preparation of the Strategic Framework for 2008-2009; Technical cooperation activities of the UNECE and the progress of two specific issues: the UNECE contribution to the Commission on Sustainable Development cycles, and promotion of ICT in UNECE work.



### Comments from Chairmen of UNECE Sectoral Committees

(for Committee on Environmental Policy and Committee on Inland Transport see UNECE Weekly Nos. 140 and 159 respectively)

*Alexander Šafařík-Pštrosz, Chairman,  
Trade Committee*

“Trade facilitation” covers all the measures that can be taken to smooth and simplify the flow of trade. These include most of the activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data for moving goods in



international trade. Goods cannot move faster than the information that accompanies them. Now, national regulatory authorities often amend or add formalities without considering what effect this might have on the overall trading system. Traders then find themselves confronted with outmoded, incompatible and inefficient regulations and procedures. All of this significantly increases transaction costs. It also discourages participation in international trade, especially by small and medium-sized enterprises. According to estimates, the additional costs can easily reach 4 to 6% of the total value of world trade. Trade facilitation measures, therefore, aim at removing procedural barriers and consequently reduce transaction costs for traders. ❖

*Hubert van Eyk, Chairman  
of the Committee on  
Housing and Land  
Management*

One of the crucial issues in terms of housing in the UNECE region is the specific issue of high-rise residential buildings, particularly in the eastern part of the region – I am thinking of Belarus, Ukraine, Russia of course, and a number of other countries. This is a very important sector which deserves much political and policy attention. It is already getting some attention in a number of countries but large investments are needed to upgrade that part of the housing stock which is quite a substantial part (around 30-40%, sometimes even more) of the total housing stock. It is important from the housing point of view but also from the point of view of energy saving; much needs to be done to improve these buildings so that they become more energy-efficient. Another important aspect is the legal framework in which the organization of maintenance and refurbishment of



these high-rise residential blocks is operating. The legal framework is often not sufficient to be able to take effective measures for maintenance and refurbishment. The UNECE was one of the first international institutions to recognize this housing problem in the region, for example by publishing guidelines for “condominiums”. ❖

*Heikki Pajujoja, Chairman, Timber  
Committee*

We all are meeting real challenges. The whole forest sector is under strong competition from regions of the world



where forests grow faster, production costs are lower and where also markets are expanding faster than in our region. The response to that challenge is to create a higher degree of value added to existing products and services. And when it comes to competition with other materials and sectors, our important asset for the



Katherine K. Wallman, Chair,  
Conference of European Statisticians



UNECE will continue to coordinate international statistical work, develop statistical methodologies, and provide technical assistance

in statistics – areas where the UNECE has a long history of leadership. In addition, priorities will include the development of a database for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals.

Given the many international organizations in the UNECE region, it is an ongoing challenge for the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and UNECE to coordinate statistical activities. In cooperation with OECD and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the UNECE has developed, over the past 15 years, the "Integrated Database of International Statistical Work Programmes in the UNECE Region"; this interactive database (available on the UNECE website) includes information on the activities of about 30 organizations that undertake statistical work in the region (e.g., data collections, standards development, and exchanges of expertise). The forward-looking database, which presents the work programmes under some 50 headings, enables the goals and planned activities of the various organizations to be monitored and coordinated.

A priority area of Eurostat and UNECE collaboration has been the preparation of recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, which the CES will consider for adoption at its annual plenary session in June 2006. ❖

### Coming up ...

21-23 February Sixty-first session of the Economic Commission for Europe

21-23 February Working Party on Noise

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Laszlo Molnar, Chairman of the Committee on Sustainable Energy



High oil prices, rapidly growing oil demand, more and more bottlenecks in the oil infrastructure, such as a lack of pipelines, tankers, refineries and too few oil-engineers, have weakened the balance of global energy supply and demand.

In recent years, the security of energy supply has decreased in the UNECE region. Simultaneously, the import dependence on oil and natural gas has increased, and is now around 60% and 40%, respectively. Moreover 95% of European Union natural gas imports depends on only three countries. There are many other risks, the import of hydrocarbon comes from politically unstable regions, the terrorists risk is growing and last but not least, there is not enough investment in oil and gas infrastructure.

It is a new phenomenon that energy efficiency is considered as a key factor in increasing competitiveness and improving living conditions. Effective energy-efficiency policies could therefore make a major contribution to the competitiveness and employment of the UNECE region. At the same time we may say that energy saving is the quickest, most effective and most cost-effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. ❖

↓ Heikki Pajujoja (cont.)

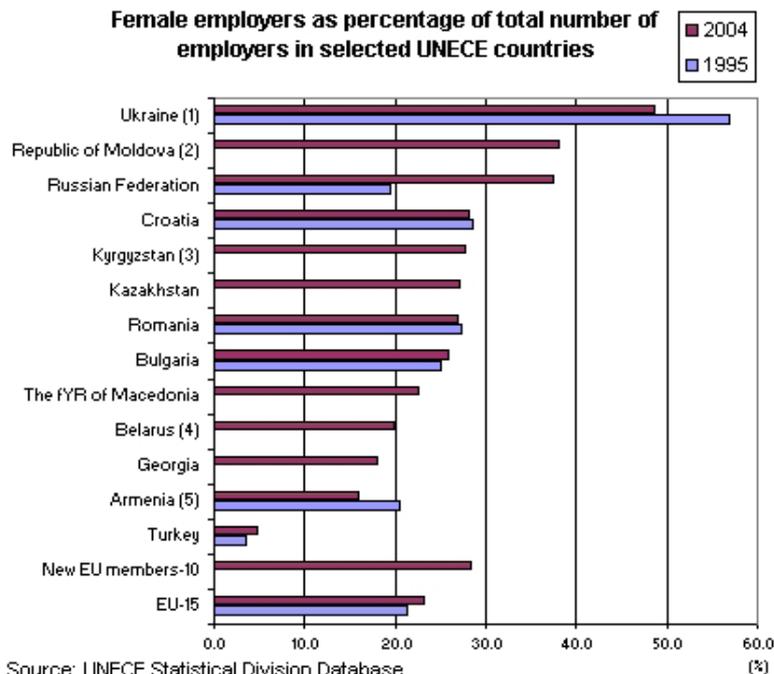
sector is that it bases itself on a renewable resource. This is a marketing power and tool that has not been recognized widely enough yet. Another problem concerns the acceptability of forest management practice to the general public whose understanding of forest issues is often based on fundamental misunderstandings

There is a lot of diversity across countries in how the forests are viewed and used. Forests serve a multitude of functions. Sustainability and multifunctionality are guiding principles of forest policies and forest management. Achieving sustainable forest management is primarily a sovereign national responsibility. However, regional international cooperation will contribute by developing and disseminating concepts and information, sharing experience and defining standard measurement tools (indicators). We need to respond to society's concern on a range of issues related to the sector, like climate change, forest health, biodiversity, deforestation, wastes, emissions and recycling of materials. For example when climate change is discussed we should underline that wood when sustainably produced is a CO2 neutral and a renewable resource. ❖

### Facts and figures

#### Male employers still outnumber female employers

Female employers as percentage of total number of employers in selected UNECE countries



(1) Own account workers are included; (2) Transnistria region and town of Tighina are not taken in account; (3) Refers to 2002; (4) Refers to 2000; (5) 1995 refers to 1997, and 2004 refers to 2003.

The graph shows the percentage of female employers over the total number of male and female employers. Employers are workers who hold a self-employment job and have continuously engaged one or more persons to work for them as employees. The third Millennium Development Goal aims to promote gender equality and women empowerment. Almost all the selected countries have a significantly lower proportion of female employers than male employers.

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