



# UNECE Weekly

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

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## **ECOSOC**

The substantive session of ECOSOC continued last week with a discussion of regional cooperation. The recent reform of UNECE was widely appreciated, aiming as it did at restructuring the programme of work based on the priorities agreed to by its member States.



Jarl-Hakan Rosengren (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the European Union highly valued the regional cooperation for economic and social development, both within the United Nations and outside. It welcomed the reform of the ECE, citing it as a good model for the United Nations as a whole. It addressed major concerns, and streamlined the institutional arrangements which had already proved to be effective. He expressed the hope that when the reform was fully implemented ECE would be a better organization to meet the needs of its 56 member countries. He reiterated the EU's strong support for the work of the regional commissions.



Terry Miller (United States) said that the United States strongly supports the ECE reform. It reflects the member countries' priorities, it was a member driven exercise and a bottom-up reform process in decision-making. He expressed the view that the agenda item on regional cooperation deserved greater attention. The topic should

be one of the main responsibilities of ECOSOC, and ECOSOC needed to deal adequately with its functional and regional commissions.



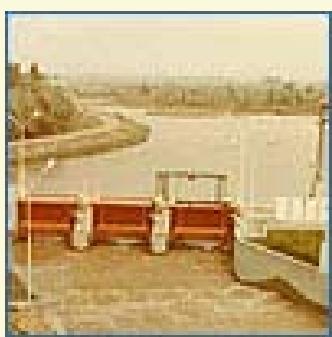
A.A. Petrov (Russian Federation) said that his country appreciated the ECE reform, which was aimed at considerably streamlining its management structure, improving transparency and accountability, and restructuring the programme of work based on the priorities of its member countries. The newly-established Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration would, in their view, help to eliminate division lines in Europe in view of the EU enlargement, and foster the formation of a common European economic area.



Anton Egger (Switzerland), welcoming the ECE reform, said that the Commission had strengthened its capacity to react to demands by its member States and so better respond to their primary needs. The cohesion of the region would thus be strengthened by concrete activities. He considered that it was now up to ECOSOC to assure an adequate framework for ECE and the other regional commissions to adapt to the particular needs of their member States and the challenges specific to each region, and to seek complementarities and synergies with other actors of the United Nations at the regional level, in particular the operational entities.

## ***A significant step forward in Central Asian water relations***

The newly created Chu-Talas Rivers Commission was inaugurated in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 26 July, representing a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share the responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. As part of the bilateral agreement, Kazakhstan has agreed to pay part of the operating and maintenance expenses for a number of Kyrgyz dams and reservoirs supplying water to both countries.



According to UN officials, this represents a significant step towards addressing a contentious issue and achieving a breakthrough in water relations in Central Asia, as the sharing of water

resources, in particular between upstream and downstream countries, is often characterized by tension and insecurity.

The establishment of the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission has been supported by a joint project implemented by two UN regional commissions – UNECE and UNESCAP – and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have equal standing in the Commission, whose Statute has been prepared and agreed on by the concerned ministries and agencies of both countries, and each country will report to its water management agency.

The project is part of a coordinated effort by the international community to support the Rivers Commission's formation. The EU has implemented a project on integrated water resources management in the basins of the Chu and Talas rivers. The Asian Development Bank has provided support for setting up the Commission secretariat and renovating some infrastructure on the rivers.

Applying the example of Kazakh-Kyrgyz cooperation to resource sharing in other transboundary river basins in Central Asia would lead to greater all-around capacity to meet the region's water needs.

For more information visit <http://www.talaschu.org/> or contact Bo Libert ([bo.libert@unece.org](mailto:bo.libert@unece.org)) or Koji Iwakami ([iwakami.unescap@un.org](mailto:iwakami.unescap@un.org)).

## ICT policymaking

UNECE and UNESCAP have jointly organized a Regional Seminar on Capacity Building for ICT Policymaking in Central Asia.



Chairperson of the meeting, Janat Beishenov,  
First Deputy Minister,  
Ministry of Transport  
and Communications of  
Kyrgyzstan

Held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on 11-14 July, this was a first follow-up activity of the SPECA Project Working Group on ICT for Development, whose inaugural session was held last December in Baku.

The objective of the Seminar was to assist decision-makers in Central

Asian and neighbouring countries in building their indigenous capacity for ICT policy and strategy development, in particular for the integration of ICT in national development programmes.

UNECE produced training modules on legal aspects of ICT policy development, which focus on ICT policy, law and regulations with special reference to the telecommunication sector; facilitating electronic transactions; and ICT and security.

The training materials will be upgraded incorporating feedback received from the participating countries, and including additional issues on Intellectual Property Rights for future capacity-building seminars and for a publication. Delegates from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have already expressed their interest in organizing follow-up national capacity-building seminars in their countries on the same subject.

The seminar was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Kyrgyzstan, and the Administrative Department of the President of Kyrgyzstan.

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## New concept of SPECA

### Combining policy-business-research dialogue with decision-making

One of the main objectives of the recent reform of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia was to more actively involve the business and research community and civil society in its decision-making and programme implementation. The first practical steps in this direction were taken last June in Baku, where the SPECA Economic Forum (see UNECE Weekly No. 182) was held back to back with the first meeting of the Governing Council.

Members of the SPECA Governing Council took an active part in the discussions of the Economic Forum – as panellists or moderators – together with representatives of private business, economic research institutes, women associations and international and regional organizations. The next day the Governing Council discussed and built upon the best ideas and initiatives presented during the Economic Forum when it provided guidance on future activities of SPECA Project Working Groups (PWGs). It decided that these ideas should be developed into project proposals and submitted to the concerned PWGs for

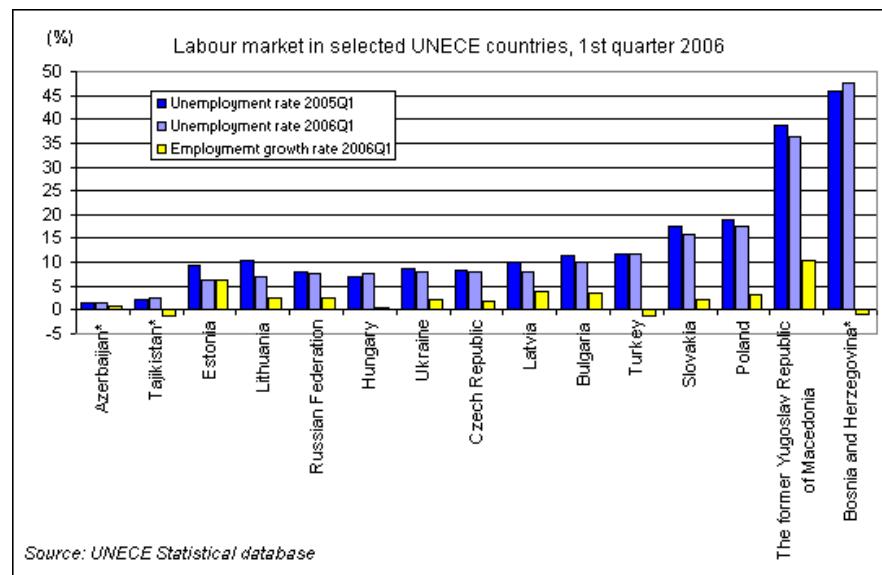
consideration. Among the ideas presented was the Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency (proposing to spread the experience of SPECA energy efficiency demonstration zones in selected cities to the whole region).

The SPECA Network of Economic Research Institutes is expected to underpin the discussions of the Economic Forum and the Governing Council with analytical work. It will for example undertake studies by regional teams of researchers and research institutes on the strategic issues identified and discussed by the two bodies with the aim of producing concrete policy recommendations for the governments concerned.

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## Facts and figures

### Overview of the labour market in selected UNECE countries



Source: UNECE Statistical database

#### Notes:

Employment growth rate is calculated over the same period of the previous year.

\* Registered employment and unemployment rate.

In the first quarter of 2006, most countries in the UNECE region registered a decrease in the unemployment rate and an increase of the number of employed persons, compared to the same period of the previous year. Tajikistan, Hungary, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were exceptions to this trend and higher unemployment rates and lower employment levels were recorded. High levels of unemployment still affect the following countries: Slovakia (15.9%), Poland (17.4%), The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (36.2%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (47.5%).