



UNECE Weekly

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Today's urban challenges

UNECE Ministerial Meeting in Geneva

Last year a number of countries experienced protest and unrest from residents of distressed urban districts. This makes all the more timely the UNECE meeting of all Ministers responsible for housing, urban planning and land management convened on 19 September 2006. The meeting will take place in Geneva as part of the 67th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management (*Palais des Nations, Conference Room VII, starting at 10 a.m.*).

Ministers will discuss the challenges in urban housing that many countries are facing today and policy approaches to tackle them. The debate will be organized around two panels, which will focus on social and economic integration through human settlements development policies and the management of the multi-family housing sector. It is expected that a Ministerial Declaration will be adopted at the meeting.

For more information visit <http://www.unece.org/hlm/sessions/67thsession.htm>.

Violence against women



Violence against women (VAW) is recognized as a fundamental violation of women's human rights. However there is still a chronic lack of

relevant data on the nature, prevalence and incidence of the various types of violence against women, particularly in some regions. This lack is a major barrier to effective policymaking to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

A special issue of the ECE Statistical Journal* dedicated to the measurement of violence against women is a contribution to the United Nations Secretary-General's in-depth study requested by the General Assembly on all forms and manifestations of violence against women. It collects together some of the papers presented at an Expert Group Meeting organized in 2005 by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with the UNECE and WHO, as well as papers from other meetings that focused on the implementation of national surveys to measure violence against women. The aim is to summarize the experience accumulated in the measurement



Tapping coal mine methane

As global energy demand increases and fuel prices rise, more effort is being made to tap unconventional energy resources including natural gas from coal seams, often referred to as coalbed methane (CBM). For the coal mining industry, however, the methane released from the coal when mined presents a safety hazard and must be vented to reduce the threat of explosion.

Although this addresses important safety concerns, the release of methane increases greenhouse gas emissions. With UNECE member countries accounting for 38% of global coal production and 40% of global mine methane emissions, production of CBM, utilization of mine methane, and reduction of greenhouse gases through use

of the mine gas are all important issues.

The UNECE's Working Party on Gas and Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane are jointly sponsoring an



international workshop in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation from 20-22 September 2006 to further examine technical and market developments, especially as they relate to countries in the EECCA region.

For more information contact Clark Talkington (clark.talkington@unece.org).

Geneva's favourable response to federal ordinance

In reply to a consultation at federal level on the proposed ordinance setting up a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) in Switzerland, the Conseil d'Etat of the canton of Geneva has responded in favour. This new federal ordinance will put into effect the Protocol on PRTR under the Aarhus Convention which was signed by Switzerland at the 5th Environment for Europe conference in Kiev in 2003.

A more dependable inventory of the hazardous pollutants emitted into the air, water and soil can be established, which would also lead to more transparency in the activities of the establishments which manufacture and/or use polluting substances. The ordinance will however only apply to a few Geneva enterprises since it concerns only those which release large quantities of pollutants or transfer large quantities of wastes. Local reduction in total emissions will not therefore be greatly affected.

For more information on the Swiss PRTR ordinance, see <http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/fr/5445#>.



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of VAW within the framework of official statistics, particularly in relation to the use of population surveys. It also intends to present the challenges that official statistics face in improving the data on VAW and suggest opportunities for overcoming them.

Data sources

Police or court records have, until recently, been the most common sources of data used for assessing the scope of VAW, but these sources have several limitations. They remain a biased source of information; women tend to under-report the offences and consequently statistics based on reported cases heavily underestimate the phenomenon.

Population-based surveys are a more reliable method for collecting information on the level of violence against women in a general population since women do not need to formally report such violence. Also, if properly designed, such surveys reflect the

actual occurrences of victimization rather than what is reported to officials.

In addition to surveys designed and carried out by national statistical offices or other national institutions presented in this volume, international organizations such as WHO and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI) have developed survey methodologies and implemented them in several countries in a standardized format, with the aim of obtaining estimates on the prevalence of VAW which would allow for inter-country comparisons. There is still however a lack of standardized methods and instruments for data measurement and collection. More work is needed to ensure greater uniformity and comparability in the collection and reporting of data on all forms of violence against women.

** Statistical Journal Vol. 22 (2005), # 3/4 – Special issue: Violence against women*

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Market Surveillance

As a result of the global economy and the increasingly rapid movement of goods, unsafe and substandard products are arriving in ever greater quantities on national markets and posing a major challenge for countries worldwide and often endangering the health and safety of consumers and users.



The UNECE "MARS" Group (Advisory Group on Market Surveillance) helps public authorities from countries in transition and developing countries to obtain first-hand

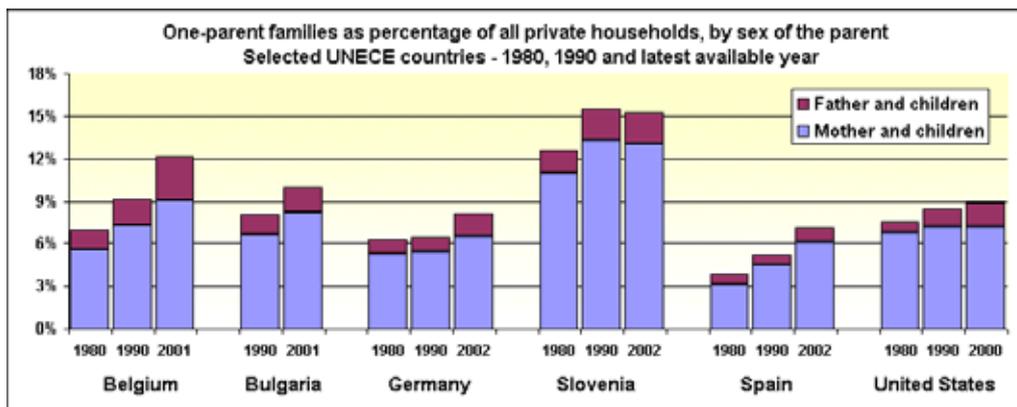
information on how to protect human health and safety, animal and plant life and health, as well as the environment, without introducing trade restrictive practices. The Group will meet on 25 and 26 September in Bratislava, Slovakia, bringing together experts from the UNECE and other regions.

The meeting is organized in the framework of the activities of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6).

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Facts and figures

One-parent families are increasingly common in UNECE countries



Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database

A lone parent living with one or more children is becoming an increasingly common family type in most UNECE countries, due mainly to the rising divorce rates. By the early 2000s, such families accounted for 15% in the total number of private households in Slovenia and 12% in Belgium.

The large majority of one-parent families are composed of a mother with children. However, in the last decade, the proportion of one-parent families composed of a father with children increased, most visibly in Belgium, accounting for a quarter of one-parent families in 2001. This may reflect the increasing propensity to assign the custody of the children to the father after a divorce.

Coming up ...

11-14 September
Work Session and Workshop on Gender Statistics

11-15 September
Joint Meeting of the RID Safety Committee and the UNECE Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

12-14 September
Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication (Washington D.C., United States)

14-15 September
Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

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