



UNECE Weekly

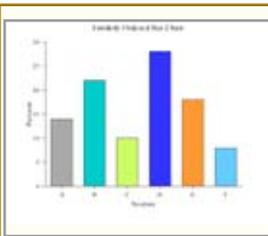
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How to improve measurement of GDP in the face of globalization and other challenges

Spatial planning can help sustainable urban development in countries in transition



This was the overarching topic of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on National Accounts held in Geneva on 21-24 April.

Delegates from European, North and Latin American and Asian countries, and several international organizations

considered different aspects of the issue.

Informal and underground economy...

The first part of the meeting was dedicated to issues of interest to transition economies, such as measuring the non-observed economy and an introduction to the measurement of capital services – a new concept that represents a big challenge for official statistics.

Statisticians from the CIS and Western Balkan countries are familiar with the general methodology of measuring informal and underground economic activities, so the meeting focused on practical examples (from Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the Western Balkans), and discussed the measurement of services provided by private entrepreneurs, measurement of illegal activities (focusing on drug production and trade, prostitution, smuggling and illegal alcohol), and estimation of owner-occupied housing.

...and dwelling services

The user-cost approach is a recommended methodology for estimating the dwelling services that the owner-occupiers provide to themselves, or in other words the rent that is imputed to account for people living in their own homes.

It is important to take this into account to ensure the comparability of GDP between countries as the share of houses/apartments inhabited by their owners may range from about 30% to close to 100% in different countries.



increasingly multicultural society, aiming to strike a balance between the needs for sustainable transport and technological innovations on the one hand and respect for the environment on the other.

“Smart” planning solutions also include the creation of strategic partnerships and networks, such as the informal conferences of local authorities in the city-regions of Scotland and the development of land-use guidelines such as those in Finland, promoting the local-level implementation of international agreements for the protection of cultural environment, biological diversity and climate change. ❖

* available at http://www.unece.org/hlm/prgm/urbanenvperf/Publications/spatial_planning.pdf.

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How do we make sure we properly address the many socio-economic and environmental challenges facing us? How do we balance the need for industrial and economic growth with the need to protect the environment? How do we develop new housing and transport infrastructures while limiting urban sprawl and its impact on climate? How do we enhance the competitiveness of urban areas while fighting poverty in the outskirts of cities?

Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are experiencing an unprecedented growth of their urban areas and urgently need to develop systems that are appropriate for their social, economic and cultural environments.

A UNECE study* launched today reports that spatial planning can provide an interdisciplinary platform for mapping policies for economic development, the environment and social cohesion.

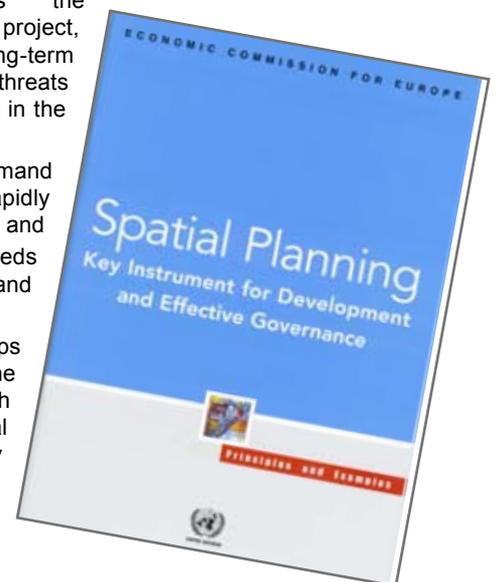
“What we are presenting today might not be new for the more advanced countries in Europe”, noted Christina von Schweinichen, Acting Director of the UNECE Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, “but it is a powerful and effective planning tool for sustainable urban development in many countries in transition. For example, in most of the municipalities in South-Eastern Europe, approximately half of the housing stock was built in the 1970s without any physical or spatial plans. When land-use plans were envisaged, they did not anticipate the current patterns of growth”.

The study, addressed to policymakers in the region, provides principles, ideas and examples on how to translate countries’ visions for the future into long-term plans that cover conditions for development, the location of different activities and their impact on land and people.

The guidance provided draws also on the experiences of other UNECE countries.

One example is the “Netherlands 2030” project, which explores long-term opportunities for and threats to spatial development in the country.

It addresses the demand for space of a rapidly growing population and



Dissemination of statistical data



When we collect, store and process statistical data, there is still an important step to be done. Official statistics have to be made available and explained to users. A series of workshops is being organized:

Workshop on dissemination systems (12 May)

Participation open to those who intend to implement data dissemination systems or have experiences to share. UNECE will share its experiences gained from implementation of PC-AXIS.

Further information available on: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.05.dissemination3.htm> or by e-mail: steven.vale@unece.org

Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication (13-15 May)

Participation is encouraged of public information officers and all those who have to communicate official statistics to the media and who have to write stories explaining the numbers.

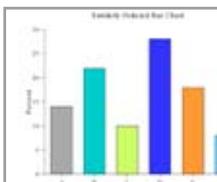
Further information available on: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.05.dissemination.htm> or by e-mail: jessica.gardner@unece.org.

Workshop on Dissemination and Communication of Census Results (16 May)

This workshop will bring together public information officers with subject matter specialists in the area of population and housing censuses.

Further information available on: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.05.dissemination2.htm> or by e-mail: paolo.valente@unece.org and jessica.gardner@unece.org.

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National accounting...

The meeting also reviewed the strategy for implementing the revised global standard for national accounting – SNA Rev.1, and addressed the need for additional data collections and ensuring international comparability of statistics on Research and Development.

...and the impact of globalization

There was great interest in the third part of the meeting dealing with the impact of globalization on national accounts.

Globalization creates many challenges for official statistics. The lowering of trade barriers and the activities of multinational companies with their complicated network of affiliates in different countries have resulted in the production function being spread across national borders.

Also more and more services are provided across the world, for example computer software services. Under these conditions it becomes increasingly difficult to measure GDP and all the related economic transactions from a national viewpoint.

A working group has been set up under the Conference of European Statisticians to deal with the distortions to the traditional statistical measures that are occurring as a result of globalization, and over the next two years it will develop operational guidelines for countries to deal with these problems.

Its research agenda includes the recommended treatment of goods sent abroad for processing; recording of merchandising; and implications of the activities of multinational enterprises for the allocation of value added and income to national economies. ❖

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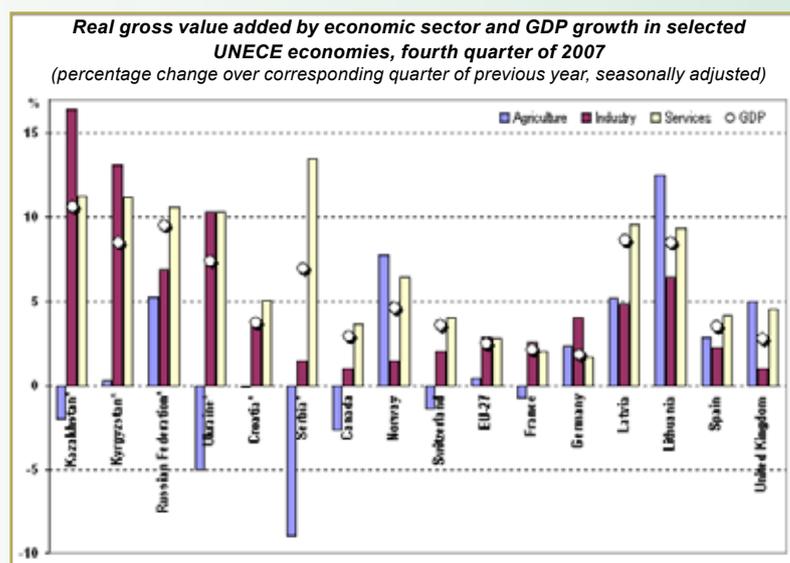
Facts and Figures

Recently released GDP estimates for the fourth quarter of 2007 confirmed earlier predictions for some deceleration of economic growth in the EU, North America and some South-East European countries (see ECE Weekly No.255). For the same period, GDP growth remained steady across the CIS region.

On the output side, the weakest performance was registered in the agricultural sector, judging by the data for the last quarter: the sector's output in the EU nearly stagnated, while Canada, Switzerland and many South-East European and CIS economies reported a decline in value added in this sector, due in part to the bad weather conditions in 2007.

The fourth quarter GDP growth in the CIS region was based on substantial increases in industrial output, reflecting accelerated construction activity (in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), and manufacturing (in Ukraine). The continuous expansion of the service sector, particularly trade and transport, contributed as well. In fact, in the Russian Federation, the service sector led the GDP growth. Services also led in a number of developed UNECE economies. In the EU, the aggregate GDP growth was supported by increase in the real value added produced by this sector, in particular by financial services and business activities; the industry sector was, however, a stronghold, particularly in France, Germany, and Slovakia. ❖

Many ECE economies report weak agricultural output in the fourth quarter of 2007



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>), Eurostat and national statistics.

*Not seasonally adjusted.

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