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Innovation and economic dynamism

Innovation – the introduction of new products or processes, often with a superior technological content – is an essential driver of economic dynamism and sustained prosperity. Innovation is the result of a complex set of interactions between public authorities, business, research institutions and consumers.

Innovation outcomes depend on the availability of inputs used in the innovation process, such as education or research and development spending. There are significant national differences in these variables, which are often associated with income levels.

However, the ability of national innovation systems to effectively deliver depends also on the efficiency to convert innovation inputs into innovation outputs. The degree of efficiency is influenced by factors such as the general economic and legal environment, the type of relations between public research institutions and industry, or the existence of an infrastructure that facilitates the diffusion of innovation through the economy. Linkages between various innovation stakeholders are an important factor influencing innovation efficiency, being increasingly a target for innovation policies.

Using the share of high-tech exports in total exports as a proxy for innovation performance, the graph below shows a positive relation with one of the dimensions of the innovation effort (R&D expenditures as a share of gross domestic product). In a simplified way, the graph also suggests the existence of variations in the degree of innovation efficiency across countries. Some of the main outliers in the graph, such as Hungary or Ireland, can be explained by the impact of foreign direct investment on the export structure.

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Human resources management in statistics

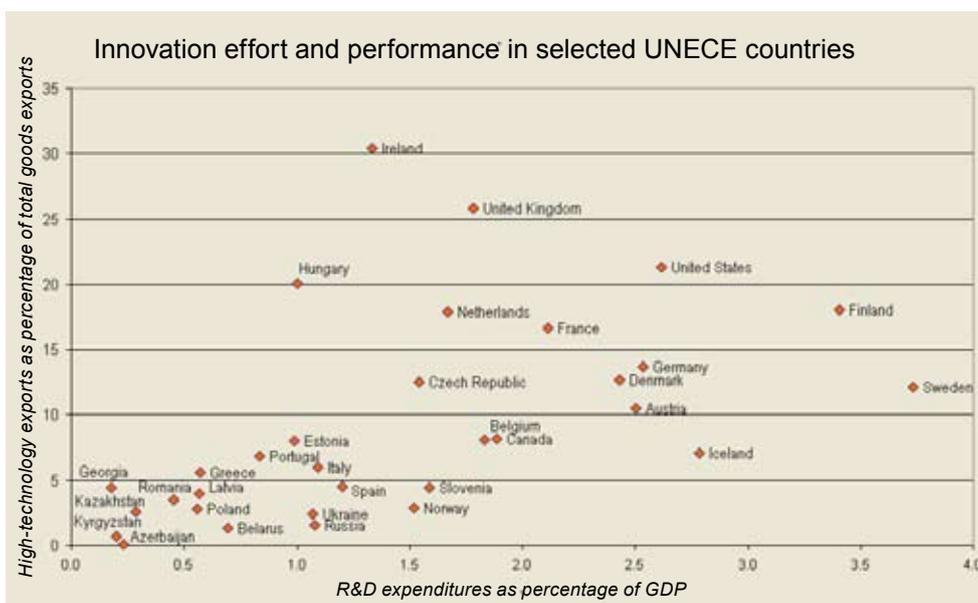
Human Resources Managers and Directors-General of national statistical offices and international organizations met on 3-5 September in Skopje, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to discuss challenges in human resources in statistics.



Hosted by the State Statistical Office, the meeting, the first of its kind, focused on the key human resources competencies needed to develop official statistics in the future and training programmes in statistical offices. The statistical offices are in competition with other employers for the best qualified of the new, "digital" generation, and the task of how to attract and retain the highly qualified staff of tomorrow is a major challenge.

The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians will decide in October on possible follow-up activities to the Skopje meeting.

For more information contact Carsten Hansen (support.stat@unece.org).



Source: World Bank, Global Development Indicators, OECD, Science, Technology and Industry Scoreboard, own calculations.

Note: Data for latest available year (2005 or 2006).

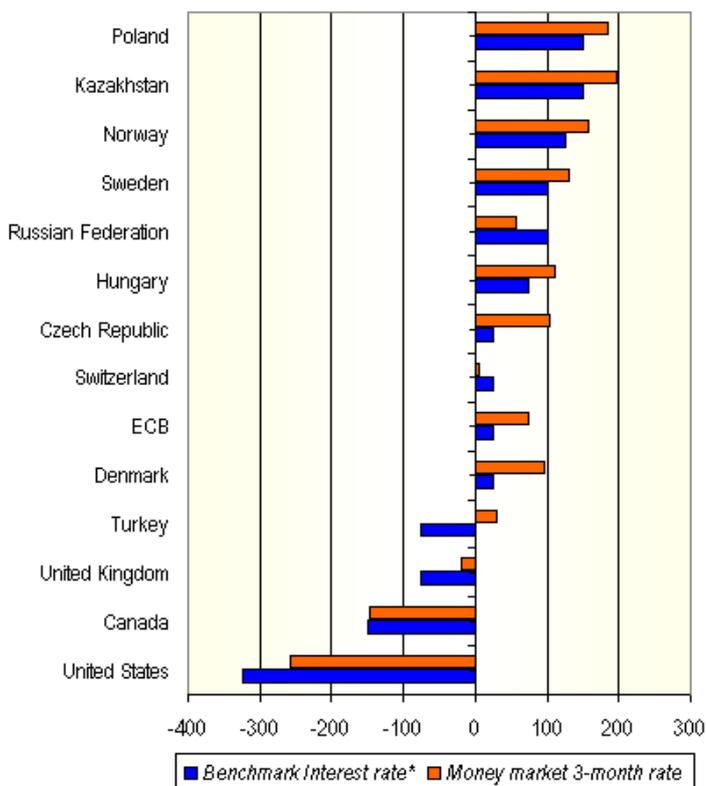
Facts and Figures

A year of credit market turmoil

The credit market turmoil that began a year ago, in August 2007, raised concerns about the willingness of banks to lend money to consumers and businesses, and also about the tightening of inter-bank lending in many UNECE economies. Several individual and concerted actions undertaken by the major central banks (United States, European Central Bank, Canada, United Kingdom, Switzerland) in the months that followed to increase liquidity of the markets seemed to somewhat ease these concerns. However, the gap between the changes in the central banks' benchmark rates and actual short-term interest rates depicted in the chart points to persisting caution of the money lenders.

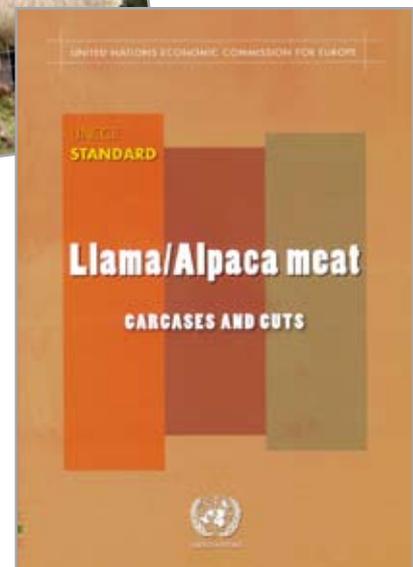
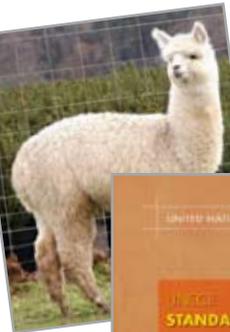
It is also important to note the somewhat contrasting moves of the central banks over the last twelve months. For example, the 325 basis points slash of the target rate by the Federal Reserve of the United States as compared to the 25 basis points tightening of the ECB's or Swiss National Bank's target rates, and even higher rate increases by many other central banks, reflected differences in their stances vis-à-vis not only the credit crunch but also the rapidly mounting inflationary pressures.

Change in short-term interest rates, August 2007 - July 2008
(in basis points)



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>) and national Central Banks.

* Central Bank's monetary policy reference or target rate.



The UNECE standard "Llama/Alpaca Meat - Carcasses and Cuts" offers for the first time internationally agreed specifications written in a consistent, detailed and accurate manner using anatomical names to identify cutting lines. Comprehensive colour photographs and diagrams are included to facilitate practical application of the standard. It recommends an international language for raw (unprocessed) llama/alpaca carcasses and cuts marketed as fit for human consumption. It provides purchasers with a variety of options for meat handling, packing and conformity assessment that conform to good commercial practice for meat and meat products, intended to be sold in international trade.

UNECE standards for meat undergo a complete review three years after publication, following which new editions are published as necessary.

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