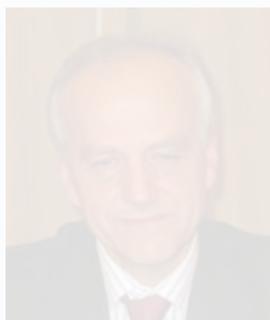




# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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## Innovation and competitiveness

### Interview with Matti Pietarinen, Chairman of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration

**What do you think about the first meeting of the newly founded Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration?**

I am very pleased with the results. First the attendance was very good and secondly we have adopted a programme of work which will be very useful for member States. All participating countries, international organizations and stakeholders from business and academic communities expressed their strong interest and commitment to cooperate in the implementation of the Committee's programme of work.

#### What is this Committee all about?

It is not about giving money. It is a forum to build up a dialogue, exchange and compare experiences, and on the basis of lessons learned and best practice, to promote economic policies aimed at strengthening competitiveness and innovation in the UNECE region.

#### What is the Committee going to do?

As a first step it is going to launch two teams of specialists, one on Competitiveness and Innovation Policies, which will meet by

1 April 2007, the other on Intellectual Property, which will meet very soon – before 1 December 2006. In addition, expert networks will be set up in these and all other thematic areas in the Committee's programme of work, such as support to entrepreneurship and enterprise creation and public-private partnerships.

#### What do you expect from these Teams of Specialists?

Each has its special focus. For example, the one on competitiveness will address issues related to the creation of the proper environment to facilitate innovative development and knowledge based competitiveness. The one on Intellectual Property will aim at building up local innovation systems, to help in commercializing and protecting intellectual property and to improve the investment environment in creative, innovative and high technology industries and enterprises.

#### What is your target audience?

Mainly ministries of industry and economy in transition economies. However I am confident that the Committee would also be of great interest for countries with developed market economies. We expect that all the member countries of the UNECE would profit from the outcomes of the work of the Committee and of the teams of specialists and expert networks that are to be set up soon. ❖

## Effective communication

Communicating effectively on the Web, statistical literacy, how to present metadata, and managing revisions and version control to maintain credibility were the topics at a recent UNECE work session.

A Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication was held on 12-14 September in Washington D.C. Participants looked at the results of website



usability testing, and how new technologies, such as graphical applications and blogs, are being used to communicate with Internet users.

They discussed techniques for good statistical writing, and ways in which agencies are working with users and staff to make statistical information more understandable.

The group heard from a panel of journalists about how the new sub-culture of precision journalism is using statistical data to find news stories. The session on metadata explored practical solutions for providing users of statistics with important contextual information, facilitating better discovery and understanding of data. During the session on managing revisions, countries shared their experiences in communicating with users when statistical values change. ❖

For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2006.09.dissemination.htm>.



## Kyrgyzstan joins road traffic convention

Kyrgyzstan has become the 64th Contracting Party to the Convention on Road Traffic.

The Convention, done in Vienna in 1968, regulates all facets of driving behaviour, such as speed and distance between vehicles, intersections and obligation to give way. It also details the technical conditions for the admission of vehicles to international traffic and provides models of domestic and international driving permits.

Recent amendments to the Convention, which entered into force earlier this year, include the prohibition of the use of handheld mobile phones while driving, the obligation for national legislation to define the content and conditions for theoretical and practical driving tests and the medical requirements for receiving a driving permit, and the recognition of the validity of an international driving permit only if presented with a valid national driving permit. The object of the latter proposal is to combat the fraudulent and dangerous sale of international permits over the Internet. ➔



cont.

Together with the Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals, the Convention on Road Traffic provides Governments with a harmonized legal and technical basis for their national highway codes and ensures a high level of road safety in the countries that implement them. Though elaborated and kept up to date by the UNECE in Geneva, the two Conventions are global in character with Contracting Parties from all continents.

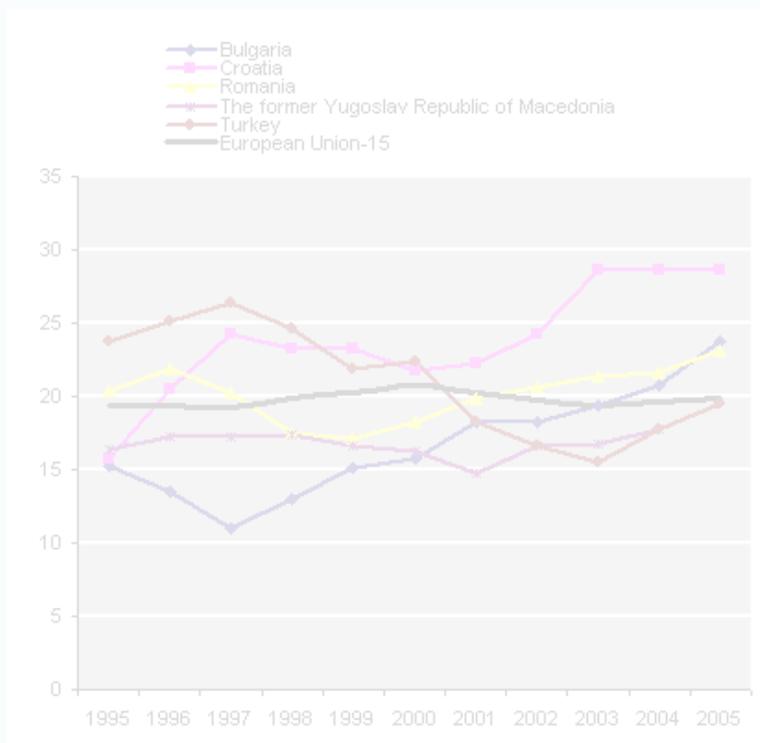
The UN General Assembly has encouraged Member States to adhere to these Conventions, in order to ensure a high level of road safety in their countries. ❖

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## Facts and figures

### Investment share is picking up in EU-candidate and acceding countries

Share of Gross Fixed Capital Formation in GDP in EU-15 and EU-candidate and acceding countries



Source: UNECE Statistical database.

Note: Ratio of gross fixed capital formation to GDP is computed from data at current market prices.

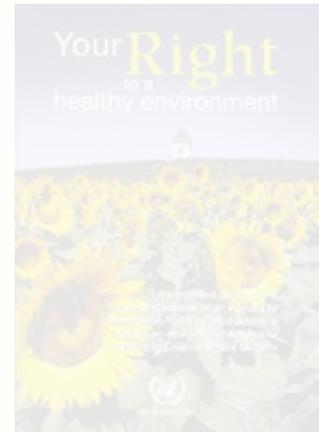
Over the last decade, the aggregate EU-15 investment in relation to GDP fluctuated around a 20 per cent mark. This steadiness of investment share in developed market economies was not shared by any of the current EU-candidate or acceding countries. Many of these countries saw their investment share squeezed during the initial transition period, drops also occurred in the late 1990s. However, in the last three to four years investment has picked up rather strongly in relation to GDP in four out of five countries under consideration. The situation in Turkey, though, was rather different: investment ratio to GDP was highest at the beginning of the period and dropped considerably between the years 1997 and 2003, before starting a timid increase in 2004 and 2005.

## Off the press ...

### Your right to a healthy environment

Following its adoption, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the Aarhus Convention a giant step forward in international law and an instrument of global significance, albeit negotiated in the UNECE region. Since then, the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters has entered into force with impressive speed and been ratified by most of the countries of Europe and Central Asia. Increasingly, it is empowering members of the public to hold governments accountable and to play a greater role promoting more sustainable forms of development.

Open to accession by States through the world, the Convention has



established a new benchmark in environmental democracy. It is unique among multilateral environmental agreements in the extent to which it seeks to enable ordinary people, irrespective of their citizenship, nationality or domicile, to have a say in decisions that affect their environment. However, the rights guaranteed by the Convention are only meaningful if they are exercised. Raising public awareness of the Convention is therefore crucial for its effective implementation.

UNECE and UNEP have therefore collaborated to produce a simplified guide, entitled "Your right to a healthy environment", which presents the rights and obligations under the Convention in plain, easy-to-understand language.

Available in English, French and Russian on the Convention website [www.unece.org/env/pp](http://www.unece.org/env/pp) or from UN Publications and Sales Section, Palais des Nations, Geneva ([unpubli@unog.ch](mailto:unpubli@unog.ch)).

## Coming up ...

- 3-6 October  
Timber Committee
- 4 October  
Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (Paris, France)
- 5-6 October  
Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Environmental Performance Reviews

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