



UNECE Weekly

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The 2004 UNECE Spring Seminar will be held on 23 February in Conference Room XVIII, Palais des Nations and will focus on "Competitiveness and Economic Growth in the UNECE Region".

The fifty-ninth annual session of the Commission will follow the Seminar, from 24-26 February. The first day of the Commission session will be devoted to a discussion of the policy implications of the Spring Seminar.

Both meetings are open to the public. The papers presented at the Seminar will be published in issue N° 2 of the 2004 *Economic Survey of Europe*.

It's just happened ...

Gunnar Myrdal Lecture

More than 900 people attended the 11 February lecture by Nobel laureate Professor Joseph Stiglitz. The lecture was part of the series of Myrdal Lectures, devoted to major international economic problems and



named after Gunnar Myrdal, a distinguished social scientist and the Commission's first Executive Secretary (1947-57). The topic of Professor Stiglitz's presentation was "The Process of European Integration and the Future of Europe". The presentation was followed by a short question and answer session. The full text of the lecture will be issued shortly.



Albania adheres to the UNECE Convention on Road Signs and Signals

Albania has become the 52nd country to become a Contracting Party to the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals. This Convention, together with the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, forms the basis of reference for national highway codes. Although elaborated by the UNECE in Geneva, countries from all continents have acceded to these Conventions. The UNECE Working Party on Road Traffic Safety, which administers the Conventions, adopted last September a package of amendments including



new definitions of cycle lanes and cycle paths, priority rules and harmonised signs at roundabouts, the possibility of incorporating the distinguishing sign of the State into the registration plate, new provisions concerning national and international driving permits and the introduction of new signs and provisions for driving in tunnels.

For more information contact Christopher Smith (christopher.smith@unece.org) or Marie-Noëlle Poirier (marie-noelle.poirier@unece.org)

Belarus announces new distinguishing sign for motor vehicles

The Government of Belarus has informed the UNECE secretariat that it will use "BY" as its new distinguishing sign for motor vehicles and trailers in international traffic. The distinguishing sign is the white oval with black letters displayed on the rear of

vehicles in conformity with the 1949 and 1968 UNECE Conventions on Road Traffic. The complete list of distinguishing signs can be found at: http://www.unece.org/trans/conventn/Distsigns_Sept_2003.pdf

Not an official record - For information only

Work Session on Statistical Metadata

Statistics is not only numbers and charts. Methods, processes, structure and other aspects of statistical data have to be explained, and such "data about data" are called statistical metadata. Data have to be accompanied by metadata, from collection, through processing, to dissemination. Metadata help to ensure correct interpretation of data and enable users to combine data downloaded from different sources of statistics available on the Internet. Statisticians from UNECE countries and Australia discussed the

harmonization of metadata concepts, models and terminology at the Work Session on Statistical Metadata, held on 9-11 February. They committed themselves to developing a general and harmonized framework for statistical metadata for national and international statistical agencies. Detailed plans for this work are to be developed, but it is expected that the first part of the framework will be available in 18 to 24 months.

For more information contact Juraj Riecan (juraj.riecan@unece.org)

UNECE facilitates rail transport in former COMECON countries and decides on eTIR

The 106th session of the UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (3-6 February) adopted in principle a new international Agreement that will ease the Customs procedures in relation to cross border rail transport in eastern Europe, CIS and China. In particular, the Agreement will provide for the possibility of using the rail consignment note as a Customs transit document, thereby avoiding repetitive issuance of national Customs transit documents. The Working Party also agreed on the principles for

computerizing the TIR procedure, focusing first on concrete proposals based on the exchange of static data elements contained in the TIR Carnet via an international, centralized database, followed by a feasibility study and possibly a pilot study. As a next step, the integration of the so-called "dynamic" data elements and the inclusion of additional features such as security and advance cargo information should be considered.

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Coming up soon ...

Round Table on Intelligent Transport Systems, 18 February in Room VII, 3 pm

16-18 February
Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

17-19 February
Inland Transport Committee

19-20 February
First Regional Meeting on Education for Sustainable Development

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Facts and figures:

Unemployment rate, total selected UNECE economies

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
France	10.7	9.3	8.5	8.8	9.4
Germany	8.4	7.8	7.8	8.6	9.3
Italy	11.3	10.4	9.4	9.0	8.7
Austria	3.9	3.7	3.6	4.3	4.4
Belgium	8.6	6.9	6.7	7.3	8.1
Finland	10.2	9.8	9.1	9.1	9.0
Greece	11.8	11.0	10.4	10.0	9.3
Ireland	5.6	4.3	3.9	4.3	4.6
Luxembourg	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.8	3.7
Netherlands	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.7	3.7
Portugal	4.5	4.1	4.1	5.1	6.5
Spain	12.8	11.3	10.6	11.3	11.3
Euro area	9.4	8.5	8.0	8.4	8.8
United Kingdom	5.9	5.4	5.0	5.1	5.0
Denmark	4.8	4.4	4.3	4.6	5.6
Sweden	6.7	5.6	4.9	4.9	5.6
European Union	8.7	7.8	7.4	7.7	8.0
Cyprus	5.5	5.2	4.4	3.9	4.4
Iceland	2.1	2.3	2.3	3.2	3.4
Israel	8.9	8.8	9.4	10.3	...
Malta	8.1	7.0	6.7	7.4	7.8
Norway	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.9	4.5
Switzerland	3.0	2.7	2.6	3.2	4.2
Turkey	7.6	6.5	8.3	10.3	9.0
Western Europe	8.4	7.5	7.3	7.8	8.0
Canada	7.6	6.8	7.2	7.7	7.6
United States	4.2	4.0	4.8	5.8	6.0
North America	4.5	4.3	5.0	6.0	6.2

Source: Eurostat, NewCronos database, OECD, Main Economic Indicators; national statistics.

Notes: Quarterly unemployment rates are seasonally adjusted. Israel is excluded from regional aggregates. Definitions of unemployment comply with ILO guidelines.

* Estimate

Not an official record - For information only