



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

Economists from all over Europe assess short-term prospects for the European economy

UNECE organised this year's Spring Meeting of AIECE*, which took place on 12-13 May. Some 60 economists from all over Europe, including from the European Commission, ECB and IMF, participated. There was a lively discussion of recent economic tendencies and short-term prospects centred around reports on world commodity prices, world trade and the macroeconomic situation in the individual European economies. Economic growth in Europe is expected to slow down, on average, to some 2% in 2005. In the euro area, real GDP will increase by only about 1.5% this year, reflecting the weak final domestic demand, the dampening effects of the strong euro on exports, and higher than expected oil prices. In contrast, average annual economic growth in the ten new EU Member States from eastern Europe will be some 4¼% in 2005, reflecting the continued solid expansion of domestic demand and favourable export competitiveness. On current forecasts, a moderate strengthening of the annual rate of economic expansion is expected for the European economy in 2006.

But the uncertainty surrounding short-term prospects is currently unusually large. Major downside risks to the short-term outlook include *inter alia* the high oil prices and global external imbalances and associated fears of a further sharp decline of the dollar. A sharp reversal of the strong rise in house prices in many countries, moreover, could also dampen economic growth. Also the

increasing importance of China as an engine of global economic growth was emphasized.

The meeting also discussed a special report on the impact of the increasing international division of labour on Europe's foreign trade, which was prepared for AIECE's working group on longer term prospects and structural change. A major challenge for European industry is to face the increasing competitive pressures from firms in emerging Asian economies for a wide range of products.



This was the first time that the AIECE had met in Geneva on United Nations premises. Prof. Joachim Scheide (Kiel Institute for World Economics), current President of the AIECE, chaired the meeting, which was opened by the UNECE Executive Secretary, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová.

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* *The Association d'Instituts Européens de Conjoncture Économique, founded in 1957, currently has 45 economic research institutes from 20 European countries as members. UNECE together with the European Commission, European Central Bank, OECD and IMF has observer status. The main objective of the Association is to stimulate the exchange of information and views on short-term national and international economic developments and economic policy stances, with a main focus on the European economies.*

Measurement of quality of work

A UNECE/ILO/Eurostat Seminar on the Measurement of Quality of Work, held on 11-13 May, recognized the need for specific statistical indicators to measure decent work/quality of work in UNECE and ILO Member States. Several frameworks on quality of work were presented: from the European Commission, the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions, ILO and OECD. The Seminar recommended setting up a small Task Force lead by

ILO with the participation of UNECE, EUROSTAT and individual experts from the UNECE member countries. Its aim is to work toward a converging conceptual framework and an agreed-upon set of statistical indicators for measuring the quality aspects of labour and employment.

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Not an official record - For information only

Two decades of work towards improved quality of statistical data

Statistical data editing and imputation is the methodology aimed at identifying and correcting possibly misreported data and imputing estimates in place of missing values using specific mathematical methods.

Ivan Fellegi, Chief Statistician of Canada, emphasized the long-term involvement of the Conference of European Statisticians in the area of data editing and imputation in his opening address at a [Work Session on Statistical Data Editing](#) (Ottawa, Canada, 16-18 May). This involvement has its roots in the UNECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Project set up in the 1980s. While it may seem like an old story, new things are still coming up. The increasing computing power of statistical information systems provides a basis for the continuous improvement of editing methodology, as computers can handle more complex estimators in a shorter time.



New communication technologies, and in particular the growth of electronic data reporting, open possibilities for combining data sources in order to improve the quality of statistics. The use of electronic questionnaires enables implementing editing and imputation procedures at the respondent's end of the survey chain, thus improving the timeliness and reliability of data. While the statistical agencies obtain higher quality of data, the respondents benefit from more user-friendly questionnaires without the need to read through bulky explanatory notes. The founders of the data editing project never thought about these possibilities twenty years ago. Their successors are moving the project forward through the Internet era in the interests of all users who want higher quality and more detailed statistical information.

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Coming up soon ...

Forum on "After Fifteen Years of Market Reforms in Transition Economies: New Challenges and Perspectives for the Industrial Sector"
24-25 May, Conference room XI, Palais des Nations, starting at 10 a.m.

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May

- 23 & 26-27 Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development
- 24-25 Forum «After Fifteen Years of Market Reforms in Transition Economies: New Challenges and Perspectives for the Industrial Sector»
- 23-25 Ad Hoc Working Group on the Harmonization of RID/ADR/ADN with the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
- 23-27 Working Party on Passive Safety
- 22-23 Working Group of Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) (Almaty, Kazakhstan)
- 25-27 Meeting of Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Facts and figures:

Female share (%) of enrolled students in selected educational fields (2003)

Field	European Union countries	Japan
Education	75.2	71.1
Humanities and art	65.6	67.3
Social science, business and law	57.0	33.6
Science, mathematics and computing	37.3	25.1
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	22.9	11.9
Agriculture and veterinary	48.8	40.6
Health and welfare	74.7	64.1

Source : Eurostat & UNECE Gender Database

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