



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

Inland transport vs maritime

Containers travelling between Iran and Germany by sea take 25 days to make the 13,500 km journey; a container train could do the 5000 km inland trip in only 14 days. Similarly a train originating in Germany and passing through Poland, Belarus and the Russian Federation, could reach the Russian far-eastern port of Nakhodka in 13 days, instead of 28 days by the sea route.



The advantages of the growing volume of freight being transported by inland transport modes, mostly railways, between Europe and Asia were stressed during a Workshop on "Euro-Asian Transport Links – Feedback from Users" (Geneva, 16 September) focusing on the current situation and future trends in freight traffic between the two continents. In spite of permanently developing transport infrastructure and efforts made by involved countries and international organisations, participants in the Workshop stressed the need for more concerted governmental actions. These actions should aim among other things at further promoting and implementing international transport agreements, standards and recommendations, further facilitating border crossing procedures. The measures should strengthen the competitive advantage of inland transport modes vis-à-vis traditional maritime routes.

For more information contact Miodrag Pesut (miodrag.pesut@unece.org). ♦

What do we do when new economic phenomena appear?

The rapid development of IT, financial services and markets, the new economic environment, globalization of markets, advances in methodological research and needs of users in recent years pose problems to statisticians on how to record the new economic phenomena and what their impact would be on economic growth and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). How for example do we record mobile phone licenses or payments for the spectrum that the telephone companies use? A few years ago, mobile phones were just a minor element of the world economy but they have now become a key element of modern life which should be reflected in national accounts. Furthermore, for years it has been argued whether the resources that companies put into R&D should be considered investment in capital or not. Is water an asset or not? In recent years its value has increased more and more. These were some of the issues discussed at the 6th and final meeting (Geneva, 14-16 September) hosted by UNECE of an Expert Group on the current revision of the worldwide standard for national accounting, the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA).



The Expert Group's recommendations will be reviewed by the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts and finally approved by the UN Statistical

Commission before becoming a worldwide standard.

For more information contact Lidia Bratanova (lidia.bratanova@unece.org). ♦

Question of the week



to Mr Heikki Pajujoja,
Chairman of the
Timber
Committee
which will meet
in Geneva, 27-
30 September

Is the European forest shrinking?

The shrinking of Europe's forests stopped in most countries between the 19th and 20th centuries. They are now expanding by about 880 thousand ha a year, mostly through natural extension onto former agricultural land, but also through plantation programmes. Conversion of forest to other uses is severely limited everywhere. The expansion of European forests contributes to a globally lower net loss of forests in the 1990s compared with the 1980s.

Are the forests still "natural"?

Russian forests are mostly natural, but elsewhere in the region most forest is "semi-natural", which includes a wide range of forest types, all influenced to a greater or lesser extent by human actions over hundreds of years.

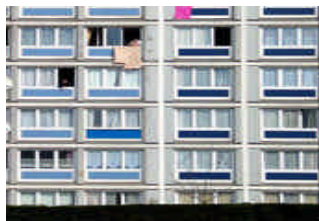
Are Europe's forests being over-cut?

Less than two thirds of the annual growth of Europe's forests (excluding Russia) is harvested, so that the volume of wood contained in the forests is growing steadily. In Russia, only 14% of the growth is harvested. As a consequence, the forests of Europe and the CIS are sequestering large amounts of carbon, about 540 million tons per year. ♦

Not an official record - For information only

Housing needs of the poor

Urgent remedial action is needed after the hasty and massive privatisation of the housing stock and the lack of its management in the EECCA* and SEE** countries. This was one of the conclusions of the Committee on Human Settlements which met last week in Geneva. The emergence and growth of informal/illegal housing, as well as corruption in the



construction sector, lack of viable housing finance systems and land supply constraints have increased dramatically transaction costs and prices for land and housing services. The drag on economic growth, constraints on social equity and potential for social unrest resulting from such neglect are continuously increasing. The Committee stressed that these issues have to be addressed immediately in order to smooth a situation which might become critical in the near future.

Social housing was also of great concern to the Committee. While it endorsed Guidelines on this issue, the Committee was worried by the continuous decline in the role of the State in the housing sector in many countries all over the UNECE region and the increasing reliance on market forces to satisfy housing demand. This trend means that the housing needs of the poor and vulnerable are most often addressed inadequately. A renewed role of the State in the provision of social housing is therefore necessary to prevent the situation from deteriorating to a point where social inequities would become unbearable.

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* *Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Europe*
** *South-east Europe*

First world road safety week

After four road safety weeks held in 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2004 at the UNECE region level, the UNECE Working Party on Road Traffic Safety decided that the **First United Nations Global Road Safety Week** will be held on 23-29 April 2007.

Organized in close cooperation between the World Health Organization, the UNECE and the other United Nations regional commissions, the Week will provide Governments of all UN Member States with a common framework for the launching of simultaneous road safety



campaigns in their countries. The campaigns will have a common logo and a common slogan, and will be centred around a common theme or target – Young Road Users, including Young Drivers.

A World Assembly of Young People in the Palais des Nations in Geneva and an international Seminar on the theme of Young Road Users are being considered by the Working Party for the launching of the First UN Road Safety Week.

For more information contact José Capel Ferrer (jose.capel.ferrer@unece.org). ◇

Facts and figures

Exports of goods and services of selected UNECE economies

Per cent of GDP at current prices

	2002	2003	2004	2005
	Q1			
Austria	48.7	48.4	51.0	50.1
Belgium	83.7	81.5	83.5	85.1
Finland	38.3	36.9	37.8	38.6
France	27.1	25.7	26.0	25.8
Germany	35.7	35.5	38.0	38.8
Greece	20.8	19.8	20.9	19.4
Ireland	93.5	83.7	80.4	78.4
Italy	27.0	25.8	26.6	26.2
Luxembourg	143.6	137.4	146.2	..
Netherlands	62.8	61.5	65.4	67.7
Portugal	29.9	30.1	30.9	30.7
Spain	27.3	26.3	25.7	24.8
Euro area-12	36.4	35.3	36.6	36.7
Canada	41.4	37.9	38.2	37.2
Denmark	44.6	42.7	43.5	44.2
Iceland	39.9	36.2	36.8	..
Israel	37.0	38.4	42.9	..
Norway	41.1	41.3	43.7	44.4
Sweden	44.1	43.8	46.3	..
Switzerland	44.1	44.1	45.9	45.0
United Kingdom	26.2	25.5	24.9	24.9
United States	9.6	9.5	10.0	10.3

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, compiled from Eurostat, OECD and national sources.
Note: Quarterly data are seasonally adjusted.

Coming up soon ...

September

- 26-28 Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics & UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics
- 26-30 Working Group on Strategies and Review
- 27-30 Timber Committee

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