



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 143 – 24-28 October 2005

It's just happened ...

Liberia accedes to the Vienna Conventions

Liberia has become a Contracting Party to the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals of 1968. This brings the total number of States Parties to the Convention on Road Traffic to 63 and to the Convention on Road Signs and Signals to 53.



Worsening problem of road traffic injuries

Road safety is a serious problem in Africa with some countries reporting a mortality rate of more than 100 deaths per 10,000 vehicles. By comparison, Sweden has a rate of about 1 death per 10,000 vehicles. Current and projected trends in motorization signal that the problem of road traffic injuries will get worse particularly in developing countries. In Africa, several countries are already Contracting Parties to these Conventions, including the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. It is expected that accession to these Conventions and, in particular, their effective implementation by Liberia will contribute to improve road safety in this country.



Vienna Conventions are important legal and technical tools

The Conventions are the most strategic tools for facilitating international road traffic and for improving road safety. The Vienna Convention on Road Traffic contains the basic rules for road traffic,

including those that vehicles and drivers must respect, and provide for the mutual recognition among all States Parties of the documents (driving permits, vehicle registration certificates) issued on the basis of this Convention. The Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals establishes a set of more than 200 harmonized road signs and signals, traffic lights as well as signs for road works and for level crossings with the railways. These two Conventions constitute the legal and technical basis for the National Highway Code of many countries around the world. ♦

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

On the way to more precise figures for GDP

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the figure most often used to assess the economic performance of countries, is calculated based on the System of National Accounts (SNA). The SNA, adopted in 1993, is a worldwide standard and guarantees that the GDP data are comparable between countries. However, the changing economic reality, the development of measurement methods and user requirements have made it necessary to update the 1993 SNA.

Calculation of GDP will be affected by the review

The review process is currently underway and the revised standard should be ready by March 2008. This is a long and complex process as the changes need to be coordinated with the experts working in different areas and they will have to be implemented in countries with very different levels

of development. The outcome will affect the calculation and consequently the levels of GDP worldwide.

Measuring capital services

One step in the updating process was the Joint OECD/UNECE Meeting on National Accounts held in Paris on 11-14 October. The meeting discussed some open issues of the SNA review, like the treatment of pension schemes, privatisation, and public corporations in the accounts, measuring capital stock and capital services, etc. Measuring capital services is one of the controversial issues under discussion. Capital services are not currently included in the accounts (only consumption of fixed capital is) but they would be needed for consistent analysis of income, wealth and productivity. This is particularly true about estimating capital services for the fixed assets owned by the general government (some examples include public buildings, parks, roads, bridges, historical monuments) where the cost of using the assets cannot be estimated based on rentals. Opinions



diverge concerning the feasibility of including capital services for such assets in the accounts. The first round of discussions is coming to an end but there is still time for countries to submit comments and proposals. ♦

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UNECE cooperates with University of Geneva

A joint UNECE/University of Geneva environmental research team has just been awarded 48,000 SFr by the Geneva International Academic Network (RUIG-GIAN) to develop detailed cost estimates of establishing national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs – inventories of pollution from industrial sites and other sources).

A cost guide will be developed to assist Parties to the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and

Transfer Registers with its implementation and to give information on cost-saving options. It will also help countries considering accession to the Protocol to rapidly evaluate the costs of their potential obligations.

Protocol aims at pollution reduction

The Kiev Protocol on PRTRs, adopted in May 2003, seeks to "enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide pollutant release and transfer registers". Although regulating information on pollution,

rather than pollution directly, the protocol is expected to serve as an



effective regulatory tool for reducing actual levels of pollution. ♦

For more information on the project contact Laura Altinger (laura.alingier@unece.org).

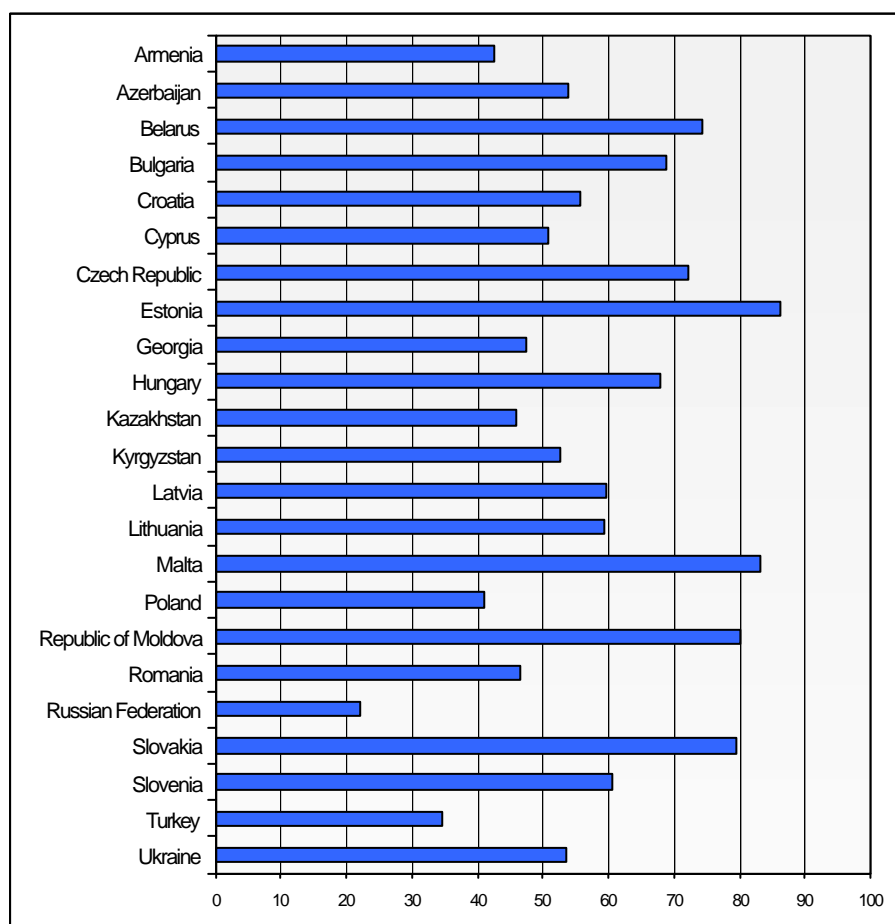
Coming up soon ...

24-26 October Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies
24 October Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice (London, United Kingdom)

Facts and figures:

Imports of goods and services of selected UNECE economies

Per cent of GDP in 2004 at current prices



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Source: UNECE Statistical Database, compiled from Eurostat and national sources.

Note: Quarterly data are not seasonally adjusted