



UNECE Weekly

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It's just happened ...

Regional Implementation Meeting

The Commission will hold a Regional Implementation Meeting in January 2004 in order to contribute to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as decided by the Ad Hoc Informal Meeting of the Commission on 2 September. The meeting will bring together national focal points for sustainable development, relevant international organizations with activities in the UNECE region, and also local authorities and representatives of civil society and the private sector. It is expected that delegations will include experts on the priority areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. The Chairperson's conclusions, instead of a negotiated outcome, will be submitted to the CSD secretariat as the regional input to the next CSD session.

Forest fires: a complex issue necessitating international cooperation

Forest fires across Europe, North America and the Russian Federation this summer have attracted public attention due to the number of victims, the intensity of the fires, the areas devastated, the environmental damage and the loss of property. Fire risk has attained unusually high levels as a direct



consequence of this summer's extreme weather conditions: heat and drought over long periods. Ecological damage (erosion, etc) has also been severe. In some European countries the area of fires is already much higher than the average area recorded during the last decade.

Prevention and fire control measures in all countries during the past decades have significantly contributed to reduce fire damage. However, under

exceptional weather conditions as is the case this year, although national fire-fighting services have accomplished the utmost at the risk of their lives, damage is significantly greater. There is still scope for increased international cooperation, which has developed strongly over recent years. This involves not

only exchange of personnel and equipment (for instance several southern hemisphere fire teams have been helping in North America this year, and extra fire suppression planes and helicopters have been brought to the Mediterranean region), but also exchange of experience, to improve tactics, strategy and policy. For more information contact Jorge Najera: Jorge.Najera@unece.org

Central Eastern European countries stress the need for modern rolling stock in their railways

A Seminar on the development of modern rolling stock and the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) technology, organized jointly by the UNECE-sponsored Trans-European Railway (TER) Project and Alstom Ferroviaria, and supported by the Union of European Professional Railway Engineers (UEEIV) (23 June, Torino (Savigliano), Italy) concluded that although the necessary upgrading of the railway infrastructure in Central and Eastern European countries is

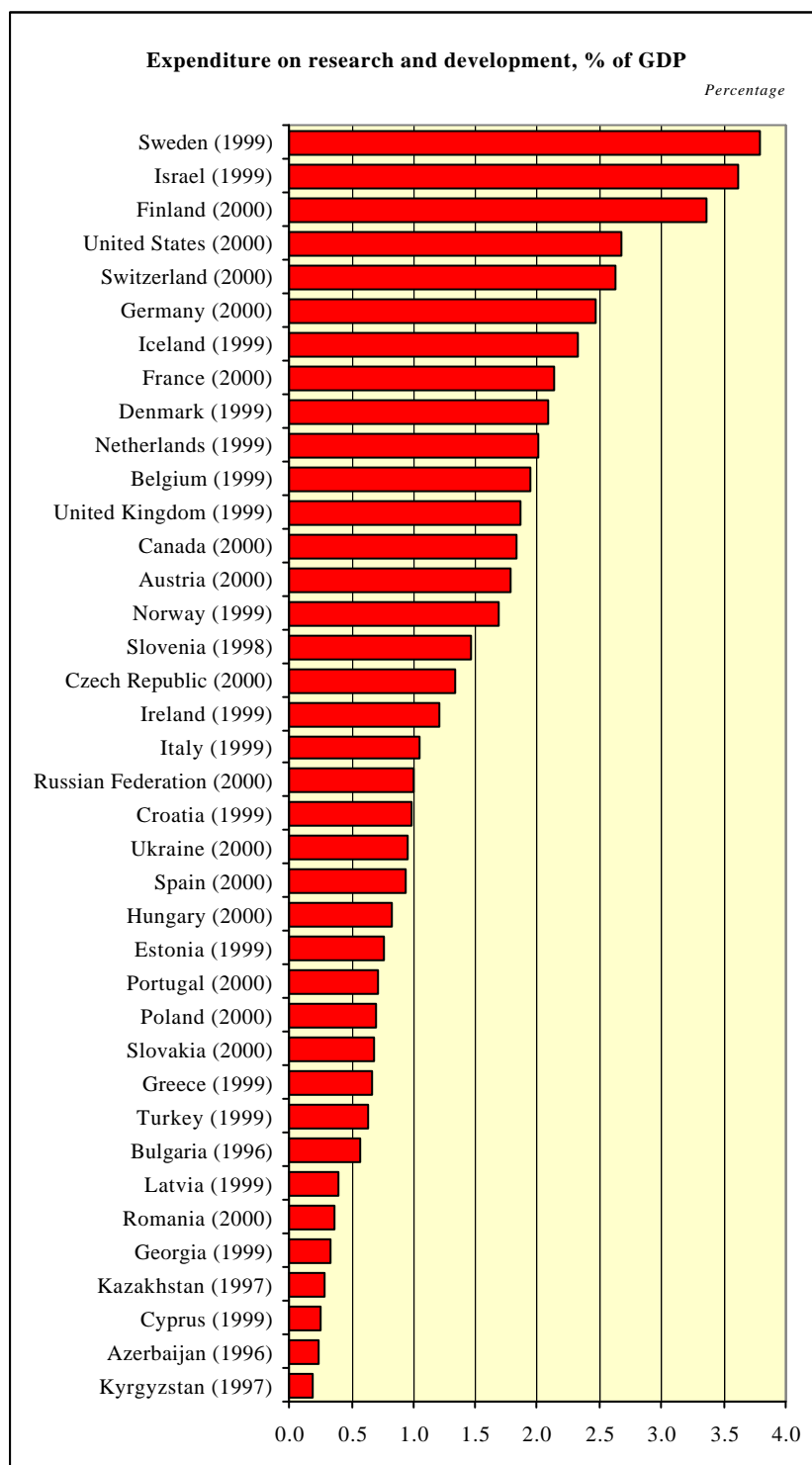
underway, this is not sufficient to ensure railway efficiency and high quality services. The introduction of new rolling stock should accompany the process of modernization of infrastructure in order to ensure the overall efficiency of the railway operators. Financial assistance is also needed in order to replace the old rolling stock.

For more information contact Michalis Adamantiadis: michalis.adamantiadis@unece.org

Coming up soon ...

- 1-10 September Joint Meeting of the RID Safety Commission and the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
- 8-10 September Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP)
- 9-14 September Workshop on Forest Operation Improvements in Farm Forests (Logarska Dolina, Slovenia)

Facts and figures:



Source: UNECE Statistical Division, based on data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
 Note: Gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) is the total expenditure on R&D performed on the national territory during a given period. It includes R&D performed within a country and funded from abroad but excludes payments made abroad for R&D.

International photo contest "Water is life"



Around 1,000 photos have been received for the photo contest organized by the UNECE, UN

Resident Coordinator's System in Uzbekistan, Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan, and Tashkent House of Photography. The contest was primarily designed for all professional and amateur photographers from the CIS and Central and Eastern Europe countries. Among the members of the jury, who will deliberate in the coming weeks, are Mrs Brigita Schmögnerová, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the UNECE, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary General for Information of the United Nations, a representative of UNESCO, two professional photographers, and one representative of the sponsors. The results of the contest should be available by the end of October.

For further information please contact:

**Information Service
 UN Economic Commission
 for Europe (UNECE)
 CH - 1211 Geneva 10,
 Switzerland**

**Tel: +41(0)22 917 44 44
 Fax: +41(0)22 917 05 05**

**E-mail:
info.ece@unece.org**

**Web site:
<http://www.unece.org>**