

December 2003

## Euro-zone unemployment stable at 8.8%

EU15 steady at 8.0%

**Euro-zone**<sup>1</sup> seasonally -adjusted unemployment<sup>2</sup> stood at 8.8% in December 2003, unchanged compared to November<sup>3</sup>, **Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities**, reports today. It was 8.6% in December 2002. The **EU15** unemployment rate was 8.0% in December 2003, unchanged compared to November<sup>3</sup>. It was 7.9% in December 2002.

In December 2003, lowest rates were registered in **Luxembourg** (3.9%), the **Netherlands** (4.1% in November), **Ireland** (4.5%) and **Austria** (4.6%). **Spain's** 11.2% remained the **EU's** highest rate.

Among the Member States for which data are available for the most recent months, ten recorded an increase in their unemployment rate over a year, three a decrease and one remained stable. The **Netherlands** (3.0% in November 2002 to 4.1% in November 2003), **Denmark** (4.9% to 6.1%) and **Luxembourg** (3.2% to 3.9%) recorded the most important relative increases. **Italy's** unemployment rate fell from 8.9% in October 2002 to 8.4% in October 2003, the **United Kingdom's** rate decreased from 5.1% in October 2002 to 4.9% in October 2003, **Spain's** rate fell from 11.5% to 11.2% and **Finland's** remained the same at 9.0%.

In December 2003 compared to December 2002, the unemployment rate for males in the **euro-zone** grew from 7.6% to 7.8%, and the female unemployment rate rose from 10.0% to 10.1%. In the **EU15** the unemployment rate for males grew from 7.1% in December 2002 to 7.3% in December 2003. Over the same period the female rate increased from 8.8% to 8.9%.

In December 2003, the unemployment rate for under-25s was 16.6% in the **euro-zone** and 15.4% in the **EU15**, the same as in December 2002 in both zones. The rate ranged from 7.0% in the **Netherlands** (in November) to 26.5% in **Italy** (in October).

In December 2003, the **US** unemployment rate was 5.7% and the **Japanese** rate was 4.9%.

Eurostat estimates that, in December 2003, 12.3 million men and women were unemployed in the **euro-zone** and 14.2 million in the **EU15**. These are seasonally-adjusted figures in line with ILO criteria.

### Unemployment rates (%) in November and December 2003 in ascending order

	December	November		December	November
<b>EU15</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	6.1	6.0
<b>Euro-zone</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	6.9	6.9
<b>Luxembourg</b>	3.9	3.9	<b>Belgium</b>	8.3	8.3
<b>Netherlands</b>	:	4.1	<b>Finland</b>	9.0	9.0
<b>Ireland</b>	4.5	4.6	<b>Germany</b>	9.2	9.2
<b>Austria</b>	4.6	4.5	<b>France</b>	9.5	9.5
<b>Sweden</b>	6.0	6.0	<b>Spain</b>	11.2	11.2

: Data not available  
Source: Eurostat

1. Euro-zone: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland.

2. *Eurostat's unemployment rates*

Eurostat compiles "harmonised" unemployment rates for Member States and Acceding and Candidate Countries. These unemployment rates are based on definitions recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). "Harmonised" means that the national micro data concerning the individuals and households are treated by Eurostat in the same fashion throughout the EU so as to allow comparability between the Member States.

The Eurostat definition of unemployed people are those aged 15 to 74 and who, following the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition:

- are without work
- are available to start work within the next two weeks
- and have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks.

The *unemployment rate* is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people employed and unemployed.

The numbers of unemployed and the monthly unemployment rate are estimates based on results of the European Union Labour Force Survey which is a household survey carried out in all countries on the basis of agreed definitions. These results are interpolated/ extrapolated to monthly data using national survey data and national monthly series on registered unemployment.

Monthly unemployment and employment series are calculated first at the level of four categories for each Member State (males and females 15 - 24 years, males and females 25 - 74 years). These series are then seasonally adjusted and all the national and European aggregates are calculated. Before the aggregation, missing national data are estimated using the most recent trends of the series.

Further information on the methodology of the monthly unemployment rate statistics can be found on the annex to News Release 67/2002 of 4 June 2002.

Registered unemployed data are national administrative data compiled on a purely national basis and purposes. There are no European-wide rules on definition and coverage. Therefore the ensuing unemployment rates cannot be compared from one country to another. National legislation on the definition of unemployment and therefore its calculation can change in individual states. The conditions to receive unemployment benefits and assistance vary from one country to another. This affects the willingness of people to register themselves and the published unemployment rates.

*Current deviations from definition of unemployment in the EU Labour Force Survey*

*Austria:* Persons without a job who expect to start or to return to their job in more than 3 months time and are available for work are included in unemployment.

*Spain, United Kingdom:* Unemployment is restricted to persons aged 16-74. In Spain the legal age limit for working is 16.

*France:* Persons (without a job, who are available for work and) whose only job search method in the past 4 weeks is their status of registration at the public employment service are included in unemployment.

*Italy:* Persons (without a job, who are available for work and) whose only job search method in the past 4 weeks is a renewal of their registration at the public employment service are included in unemployment. Employment includes persons on unpaid leave with a duration longer than 3 months, while these persons should be considered as unemployed or inactive.

*Netherlands, Sweden:* Persons without a job, who are available for work and looking for a job are only included in unemployment if they express that they would like to work.

These remaining deviations will disappear as Member States adapt their surveys to the new definitions.

Austria and France are adapting their surveys. Italy will adapt in 2004 and the Netherlands and Sweden in 2005.

Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Finland already comply with the definition.

3. The unemployment rates for the euro-zone and EU15 for November 2003 remain the same as published in News Release 4/2004 of 8 January 2004.

Issued by:  
**Eurostat Press Office**

**Philippe BAUTIER**

**BECH Building  
L-2920 LUXEMBOURG**

**Tel: +352-4301-33 444  
Fax: +352-4301-35 349  
[eurostat-pressoffice@cec.eu.int](mailto:eurostat-pressoffice@cec.eu.int)**

For further information on data:

**Veijo RITOLA**

**Tel: +352-4301-35 560  
Fax: +352-4301-34 415  
[veijo-ismo.ritola@cec.eu.int](mailto:veijo-ismo.ritola@cec.eu.int)**

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## SEASONALLY ADJUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (%)

### TOTAL MALES AND FEMALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	7.5	8.1	6.9	4.3	8.2	10.6	10.8	8.6	4.1	9.1	2.4	2.4	4.1	4.2	9.2	4.9	5.1	5.7	5.5
2002.12	7.9	8.6	7.7	4.9	9.0	9.6	11.5	9.1	4.4	9.0	3.2	3.0	4.3	6.0	9.0	5.1	4.9	6.0	5.5
2003.08	8.0	8.8	8.2	5.8	9.3	:	11.3	9.4	4.7	8.5	3.8	3.9	4.5	6.3	9.0	5.6	4.9	6.1	5.1
2003.09	8.0	8.8	8.2	5.9	9.3	:	11.2	9.5	4.6	8.5	3.8	3.9	4.5	6.6	9.0	5.6	4.9	6.1	5.2
2003.00	8.0	8.8	8.3	6.0	9.3	:	11.2	9.5	4.6	8.4	3.9	4.0	4.6	6.9	9.0	5.9	4.9	6.0	5.2
2003.11	8.0	8.8	8.3	6.0	9.2	:	11.2	9.5	4.6	:	3.9	4.1	4.5	6.9	9.0	6.0	:	5.9	5.2
2003.12	8.0	8.8	8.3	6.1	9.2	:	11.2	9.5	4.5	:	3.9	:	4.6	6.9	9.0	6.0	:	5.7	4.9

### MALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	6.6	7.0	6.3	4.0	8.2	7.2	7.6	7.4	4.4	7.0	1.8	2.0	3.8	3.5	8.9	5.2	5.6	5.8	5.8
2002.12	7.1	7.6	7.3	4.7	9.2	6.2	8.2	8.0	4.7	7.0	2.3	3.0	4.3	5.0	9.1	5.5	5.3	6.3	5.6
2003.08	7.3	7.7	8.0	5.4	9.6	:	8.2	8.3	4.9	6.6	2.8	3.6	4.4	5.6	9.1	6.0	5.4	6.3	5.3
2003.09	7.3	7.8	8.0	5.5	9.6	:	8.2	8.4	4.9	6.6	2.8	3.8	4.4	5.8	9.0	6.0	5.4	6.4	5.5
2003.00	7.3	7.8	8.0	5.6	9.6	:	8.1	8.4	4.9	6.6	2.8	4.0	4.4	6.0	9.0	6.1	5.4	6.2	5.4
2003.11	7.3	7.8	8.0	5.6	9.6	:	8.2	8.5	4.8	:	2.9	4.1	4.4	6.0	9.1	6.5	:	6.2	5.3
2003.12	7.3	7.8	8.1	5.7	9.5	:	8.2	8.5	4.8	:	2.9	:	4.5	6.1	9.1	6.3	:	5.9	5.0

### FEMALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	8.6	9.7	7.8	4.6	8.1	15.8	15.6	10.0	3.8	12.5	3.2	3.0	4.4	5.0	9.5	4.6	4.4	5.6	5.1
2002.12	8.8	10.0	8.3	5.2	8.6	14.5	16.4	10.3	4.0	11.9	4.4	3.1	4.5	7.3	8.8	4.7	4.4	5.7	5.3
2003.08	8.9	10.1	8.5	6.2	8.9	:	15.8	10.7	4.3	11.5	5.3	4.1	4.7	7.2	8.9	5.2	4.4	5.8	4.8
2003.09	8.9	10.1	8.5	6.3	8.9	:	15.8	10.7	4.3	11.3	5.3	4.1	4.7	7.6	8.9	5.3	4.3	5.8	4.7
2003.00	8.9	10.1	8.6	6.4	8.9	:	15.6	10.7	4.2	11.2	5.4	4.1	4.7	8.0	8.9	5.6	4.3	5.7	4.9
2003.11	8.9	10.1	8.6	6.5	8.9	:	15.6	10.7	4.2	:	5.4	4.2	4.7	8.0	8.9	5.4	:	5.5	5.0
2003.12	8.9	10.1	8.7	6.6	8.8	:	15.6	10.7	4.2	:	5.4	:	4.7	8.0	8.9	5.6	:	5.6	4.7

### UNDER 25 YEARS MALES AND FEMALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	14.8	15.9	17.5	7.9	9.0	28.0	21.3	19.5	7.5	27.7	7.2	5.5	6.4	9.9	20.8	12.3	12.0	12.2	:
2002.12	15.4	16.6	20.2	8.7	10.1	26.1	22.9	19.7	8.0	27.4	9.3	5.7	6.9	12.9	20.8	12.2	11.8	12.2	:
2003.08	15.6	16.7	22.3	10.5	10.1	:	22.5	20.2	8.4	26.9	10.5	6.3	7.4	15.0	22.1	12.4	12.4	12.4	:
2003.09	15.5	16.7	22.2	10.7	10.0	:	22.4	20.4	8.4	26.7	10.6	6.7	7.4	15.4	22.2	13.3	12.3	12.8	:
2003.00	15.5	16.7	22.1	10.9	9.9	:	22.6	20.6	8.4	26.5	10.9	6.8	7.4	15.7	22.3	13.6	11.8	12.3	:
2003.11	15.5	16.7	22.0	10.9	9.7	:	22.6	20.6	8.3	:	11.1	7.0	7.4	15.7	22.3	15.2	:	12.1	:
2003.12	15.4	16.6	22.1	11.1	9.6	:	22.4	20.7	8.2	:	11.0	:	7.4	15.7	22.4	14.1	:	11.7	:

### MALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	14.3	14.7	17.2	8.5	10.4	22.1	16.8	17.7	8.1	24.7	6.5	4.6	6.0	8.3	20.3	12.9	13.6	13.0	:
2002.12	15.2	15.8	21.0	9.9	11.8	19.4	19.4	17.9	8.8	24.4	7.0	6.2	6.8	10.5	21.1	12.0	13.2	12.8	:
2003.08	15.3	15.9	23.9	11.1	11.8	:	19.2	18.4	9.2	24.0	7.8	6.1	7.1	12.7	22.3	12.3	13.7	12.9	:
2003.09	15.3	16.0	23.6	11.4	11.6	:	19.1	18.6	9.2	24.1	7.9	7.0	7.1	12.8	22.3	12.4	14.0	14.1	:
2003.00	15.3	16.0	23.4	11.6	11.4	:	19.2	18.9	9.1	24.1	8.4	7.5	7.1	13.0	22.4	13.0	13.4	13.2	:
2003.11	15.3	16.0	23.2	11.6	11.2	:	19.2	19.0	9.0	:	8.7	7.7	7.1	13.2	22.5	15.5	:	13.4	:
2003.12	15.3	16.0	23.2	11.8	11.1	:	19.1	19.0	8.9	:	8.6	:	7.2	13.3	22.6	13.6	:	12.6	:

### FEMALES

	EU15	Euro-zone	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SE	UK	USA	JAP
2001.12	15.5	17.4	17.7	7.2	7.5	34.8	27.3	21.8	6.8	31.4	8.1	6.5	6.8	11.9	21.4	11.7	10.2	11.3	:
2002.12	15.7	17.5	19.1	7.5	8.2	33.8	27.5	21.8	7.0	31.3	12.2	5.2	7.1	16.0	20.5	12.4	10.2	11.4	:
2003.08	15.9	17.7	20.2	9.9	8.2	:	26.8	22.3	7.5	30.7	13.6	6.5	7.7	17.6	21.9	12.6	11.0	11.8	:
2003.09	15.8	17.6	20.3	10.0	8.2	:	26.7	22.4	7.5	30.2	13.8	6.3	7.7	18.4	22.1	14.2	10.3	11.4	:
2003.00	15.7	17.5	20.3	10.2	8.1	:	27.2	22.6	7.5	29.7	14.0	6.1	7.7	18.9	22.1	14.2	10.0	11.3	:
2003.11	15.7	17.5	20.4	10.2	8.0	:	27.1	22.6	7.4	:	14.1	6.2	7.7	18.6	22.1	14.9	:	10.7	:
2003.12	15.6	17.5	20.5	10.3	7.9	:	26.9	22.7	7.4	:	13.9	:	7.7	18.4	22.2	14.6	:	10.7	:

**25 YEARS AND OVER  
MALES AND FEMALES**

	<b>EU15</b>	<b>Euro-zone</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>EL</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>IE</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>LU</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>FI</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>JAP</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	6.4	7.1	5.8	3.7	8.1	8.5	9.2	7.3	3.4	7.2	1.9	1.8	3.7	3.3	7.5	3.8	3.8	4.5	:
<b>2002.12</b>	6.8	7.6	6.4	4.3	8.8	7.7	9.9	7.8	3.7	7.1	2.5	2.5	4.0	5.0	7.3	4.1	3.7	4.9	:
<b>2003.08</b>	7.0	7.8	6.7	5.0	9.2	:	9.7	8.2	3.8	6.7	3.1	3.4	4.1	5.1	7.2	4.7	3.6	5.0	:
<b>2003.09</b>	7.0	7.8	6.7	5.1	9.2	:	9.7	8.2	3.8	6.7	3.1	3.4	4.1	5.4	7.1	4.6	3.6	4.9	:
<b>2003.00</b>	7.0	7.8	6.8	5.2	9.2	:	9.7	8.2	3.8	6.7	3.2	3.5	4.1	5.7	7.1	4.9	3.6	4.9	:
<b>2003.11</b>	7.0	7.8	6.8	5.3	9.2	:	9.7	8.2	3.8	:	3.2	3.6	4.1	5.7	7.1	4.8	:	4.8	:
<b>2003.12</b>	7.0	7.8	6.8	5.3	9.2	:	9.7	8.2	3.8	:	3.2	:	4.2	5.7	7.2	4.9	:	4.7	:

**MALES**

	<b>EU15</b>	<b>Euro-zone</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>EL</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>IE</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>LU</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>FI</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>JAP</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	5.6	6.0	5.1	3.3	8.0	5.6	6.3	6.2	3.6	5.3	1.4	1.5	3.5	2.7	7.3	4.2	4.2	4.5	:
<b>2002.12</b>	6.1	6.6	5.8	3.9	8.9	4.9	6.7	6.8	3.9	5.4	1.9	2.4	3.9	4.2	7.4	4.6	4.0	5.1	:
<b>2003.08</b>	6.2	6.7	6.3	4.5	9.4	:	6.7	7.1	4.1	5.0	2.3	3.2	4.0	4.6	7.3	5.1	4.0	5.2	:
<b>2003.09</b>	6.2	6.8	6.3	4.6	9.4	:	6.7	7.2	4.1	5.0	2.3	3.3	4.0	4.8	7.2	5.1	3.9	5.0	:
<b>2003.00</b>	6.3	6.8	6.3	4.7	9.4	:	6.7	7.2	4.0	5.0	2.3	3.3	4.0	5.0	7.2	5.2	4.0	5.0	:
<b>2003.11</b>	6.3	6.8	6.4	4.7	9.4	:	6.8	7.2	4.0	:	2.3	3.4	4.1	5.0	7.2	5.3		5.0	:
<b>2003.12</b>	6.2	6.8	6.4	4.8	9.3	:	6.8	7.2	4.0	:	2.3	:	4.1	5.0	7.3	5.4		4.7	:

**FEMALES**

	<b>EU15</b>	<b>Euro-zone</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>EL</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>IE</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>LU</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>PT</b>	<b>FI</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>JAP</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	7.5	8.6	6.7	4.2	8.2	13.0	13.7	8.6	3.1	10.1	2.6	2.2	4.0	4.0	7.8	3.5	3.3	4.6	:
<b>2002.12</b>	7.8	9.0	7.1	4.8	8.7	12.0	14.7	9.0	3.3	9.7	3.6	2.6	4.1	6.0	7.2	3.6	3.3	4.6	:
<b>2003.08</b>	7.9	9.1	7.2	5.6	9.0	:	14.2	9.3	3.5	9.3	4.4	3.6	4.2	5.7	7.1	4.2	3.2	4.7	:
<b>2003.09</b>	7.9	9.1	7.2	5.7	9.0	:	14.2	9.4	3.5	9.3	4.4	3.6	4.2	6.1	7.1	4.1	3.2	4.7	:
<b>2003.00</b>	7.9	9.1	7.3	5.8	9.0	:	14.0	9.4	3.5	9.2	4.4	3.6	4.2	6.5	7.1	4.4	3.2	4.7	:
<b>2003.11</b>	7.9	9.1	7.4	5.9	9.0	:	14.1	9.3	3.5	:	4.4	3.8	4.2	6.5	7.1	4.2	:	4.6	:
<b>2003.12</b>	7.9	9.1	7.4	6.0	9.0	:	14.1	9.3	3.4	:	4.4	:	4.2	6.5	7.1	4.4	:	4.6	:

: Data not available  
Source: Eurostat

**ANNEX**  
**SEASONALLY ADJUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (%)**  
**ACCEDING COUNTRIES**

**TOTAL**  
**MALES AND FEMALES**

	<b>ACC</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>CY</b>	<b>LV</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>HU</b>	<b>MT</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>SK</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	14.9	7.7	10.5	4.2	12.9	14.8	5.5	7.2	19.6	5.9	19.2
<b>2002.12</b>	14.6	7.4	10.0	4.0	11.3	13.4	5.7	7.5	19.7	6.4	18.3
<b>2003.08</b>	14.2	7.6	10.1	4.6	10.3	12.5	5.7	8.0	19.2	6.6	16.7
<b>2003.09</b>	14.2	7.6	10.0	4.6	10.4	12.4	5.8	8.0	19.1	6.7	16.7
<b>2003.00</b>	14.2	7.6	9.9	4.6	10.4	12.1	5.8	8.1	19.1	6.6	16.6
<b>2003.11</b>	14.1	7.6	9.7	4.6	10.4	12.0	5.8	8.1	19.1	6.5	16.6
<b>2003.12</b>	:	7.6	9.7	4.8	10.5	11.8	5.9	8.1	:	6.4	16.6

**MALES**

	<b>ACC</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>CY</b>	<b>LV</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>HU</b>	<b>MT</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>SK</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	14.2	6.5	10.9	3.0	14.3	16.0	6.0	6.4	18.5	5.5	19.4
<b>2002.12</b>	14.1	5.8	10.4	3.5	11.6	13.2	6.1	6.4	19.1	6.1	18.1
<b>2003.08</b>	13.5	5.7	10.2	4.1	10.1	11.9	6.0	6.7	18.5	6.1	16.5
<b>2003.09</b>	13.5	5.7	10.0	4.2	10.1	11.7	6.0	6.7	18.5	6.1	16.4
<b>2003.00</b>	13.5	5.7	9.9	4.2	10.2	11.4	6.0	6.7	18.5	6.1	16.4
<b>2003.11</b>	13.4	5.6	9.7	4.2	10.2	11.3	6.0	6.7	18.5	6.0	16.3
<b>2003.12</b>	:	5.5	9.7	4.3	10.3	11.1	6.1	6.7	:	5.9	16.4

**FEMALES**

	<b>ACC</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>CY</b>	<b>LV</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>HU</b>	<b>MT</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>SK</b>
<b>2001.12</b>	15.7	9.3	10.0	5.8	11.4	13.6	4.9	9.0	20.9	6.3	19.0
<b>2002.12</b>	15.3	9.3	9.5	4.8	11.0	13.6	5.3	9.8	20.4	6.8	18.5
<b>2003.08</b>	15.0	9.9	10.0	5.2	10.6	13.1	5.5	10.7	19.9	7.3	17.1
<b>2003.09</b>	15.0	9.9	10.0	5.1	10.6	13.0	5.5	10.8	19.9	7.3	17.0
<b>2003.00</b>	15.0	10.0	9.9	5.2	10.6	12.9	5.5	11.0	19.9	7.2	17.0
<b>2003.11</b>	15.0	10.0	9.7	5.2	10.7	12.8	5.6	11.2	19.8	7.1	16.9
<b>2003.12</b>	:	10.1	9.6	5.3	10.7	12.6	5.6	11.1	:	7.0	16.9

: Data not available

The Acceding countries (ACC) are: the Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Poland (PL), Slovenia (SI) and Slovakia (SK).