The OECD area unemployment rate on a standardised basis remained unchanged in March at 7.6 per cent; this compares with a 7.3 per cent rate a year earlier. The overall European OECD unemployment rate rose 0.1 percentage points from 10.0 per cent in February to 10.1 per cent in March. In North America the unemployment rate remained constant in the United States at 6.9 per cent, while it rose by 0.2 percentage points to 11.0 per cent in Canada. In Japan the unemployment rate remained unchanged for the third straight month at 2.3 per cent, while in Australia it fell from 10.9 per cent in February to 10.7 per cent in March. The rate rose or remained constant among all European countries reporting monthly data, except Finland and the United Kingdom where it fell by 0.1 percentage points to 16.9 per cent and 10.5 per cent respectively. In New Zealand, Norway and Spain unemployment data is published quarterly. The unemployment rate in New Zealand fell by 0.5 percentage points from 10.3 per cent to 9.8 per cent between March and December, while between February and November it fell from 6.0 to 5.9 per cent in Norway and rose from 19.5 to 21.1 per cent in Spain.

There are seven OECD countries for which April data is available. In April the unemployment rate in Canada rose again, by 0.3 percentage points to 11.3 per cent, still somewhat lower than rates recorded in late 1991. In Belgium it rose from 8.7 to 8.8 per cent and in Sweden from 7.1 to 8.5 per cent. In the United States, Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom the rate remained constant in April at 6.9, 10.7, 16.8 and 10.5 per cent respectively.

Standardised unemployment rates are based on national statistics but have been adjusted when necessary, and as far as the available data allow, to bring them as close as possible to ILO guidelines for international comparisons of labour force statistics. The standardised rates are, therefore, more comparable between countries than the unemployment rates published in national sources. For further details, see the Technical Note to the table.