STANDARDIZED UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (1)

The OECD-area unemployment rate on a standardized basis was 7.8 per cent in December 1993, unchanged from November; this compares with a 7.6 per cent rate a year earlier. The OECD-Europe unemployment rate was steady at 10.9 per cent. Between November and December the unemployment rate fell from 6.4 to 6.3 per cent in the United States and from 10.9 to 10.5 per cent in Australia. The unemployment rate rose from 10.9 to 11.1 in Canada and from 2.8 to 2.9 per cent in Japan. In December, unemployment rates rose in three of the seven European economies for which monthly data are available; it remained constant in two, and fell in two. The unemployment rate rose to 9.7 per cent in Belgium, to 18.9 per cent in Finland and to 16.9 per cent in Ireland. The unemployment rate was unchanged in France at 12.0 per cent and in Germany at 6.3 per cent; it fell to 8.0 per cent in Sweden(2) and to 9.9 per cent in the United Kingdom.

The unemployment rate rose in three of the seven OECD countries for which January data are available; it was stable in two and fell in the other two countries. The unemployment rate rose from 6.3 to 6.6 per cent in the United States and fell from 16.9 to 15.5 per cent in Ireland. Caution, however, should be exercised in interpreting these changes because in both countries the January data are not comparable with the December data (3). Elsewhere, the January unemployment rate rose in Canada from 11.1 to 11.3 per cent and in Sweden from 8.0 to 8.9 per cent (2). The unemployment rate was stable between December 1993 and January 1994 in Belgium at 9.7 per cent and in the United Kingdom at 9.9 per cent. Over the same period, the unemployment rate fell from 10.5 to 10.4 per cent in Australia.

(1) Standardized 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 standardized 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.

(2) Since January 1993 data for Sweden are not seasonally adjusted.

(3) In the United States a revised survey methodology, which removes a previous bias in the recording of the female unemployment rate, has been estimated to increase measured unemployment by 0.5 percentage points. In Ireland the January data reflects the results of the 1991 Census of Population; prior data, which will be revised back to 1987, do not yet reflect these new results.