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Item 9(b) of the provisional agenda

REPORTS OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS BUREAU
MEETINGS AND PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS WORKING
UNDER THE CONFERENCE

**REPORT OF THE 2-3 FEBRUARY 2009 MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with the Rules Governing the Work of the Conference and its Bureau (ECE/CES/2007/8), adopted by the Conference at its fifty third plenary session. Referring to the Rules, the Bureau acts as a steering body of the Conference. The meetings of the Bureau are normally held in February and October each year. The report includes decisions on the work carried out under the umbrella of the Conference taken by the Bureau at its February 2009 meeting.

The documentation for the meeting is available at
<http://www.unecce.org/stats/documents/2009.02.bureau.htm>.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The second meeting of the 2008/2009 Bureau was held in Geneva on 2-3 February 2009. The following members of the Bureau attended: Ms. H. Jeskanen-Sundström (Chairman); Mr. P. Hackl; Mr. E. Pereira Nunes; Mr. G. O'Hanlon; Mr. A. Kosarev (representing Mr. V. Sokolin); Ms. A. Zigure; and Ms. K. Wallman. The following permanent observers also attended: Mr. E. Giovannini (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)); Mr. P. Everaers (representing Eurostat); Mr. M. Korolev (Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT)); Ms. A. Bürgi-Schmelz (International Monetary Fund (IMF)); Mr. M. Belkindas (representing the World Bank); and Mr. H. Brüngger (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)). Mr. M. Sheikh and Mr. B. Prigly (Statistics Canada); Mr. R. Gloersen (Statistics Norway) for agenda item 6, Ms. H. Dmochowska and Ms. D. Rogalinska (Central Statistical Office of Poland) for agenda item 2, Mr. S. Young (International Labour Office (ILO)) for agenda item 10, Ms. A. Mata-Greenwood (ILO) for agenda item 2c, and Mr. I. Chernyshev (ILO) for agenda item 8c attended the meeting at the invitation of Ms. H. Jeskanen-Sundström. Mr. B. Pink provided extensive written comments before the meeting which were reproduced as Addenda under respective agenda items.

2. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Ms. Z. Bianchini (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Brazil); Ms. S. Evinger (United States Office of Management and Budget); Ms. M. João Santos (Eurostat); and Mr. M. Mira d'Ercole (OECD). Ms. L. Bratanova of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) served as Secretary of the meeting.

3. The following staff of the UNECE Statistical Division also attended: Ms. T. Luige, Mr. C. Hansen, Mr. P. Valente, Mr. J. Riecan, Mr. S. Vale, Mr. P. Baer, Ms. V. Gaucaite-Wittich, Ms. V. Etropolska, Ms. J. Gardner and Ms. D. Serikoff.

II. IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF SELECTED STATISTICAL AREAS

4. The Bureau reviewed in-depth housing statistics. The Bureau also considered the follow-up to the in-depth reviews of environment statistics and culture statistics conducted in February 2008, and of statistics on income, living conditions and poverty undertaken in October 2007.

A. Housing statistics

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/2 (Poland), Add.1 (Australia), Add.2 (Latvia), Add. 3 (Finland), Add.4 (UNECE), Add.5 (Brazil)).

5. Housing statistics was considered based on a report by Poland and notes by Australia, Brazil, Finland, Latvia and UNECE. The Bureau thanked Poland for the excellent report providing a good basis for the discussion.

6. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Collection of housing statistics and its coordination is a significant challenge for the countries as different government agencies are responsible for housing;

(b) There are very few internationally comparable data in this area, apart from housing censuses' data, and in many fields of housing statistics data are not available or have low quality;

(c) As housing is mainly a local issue, the focus should be not so much on developing international standards but on collecting good practices; it would be useful to have an international organisation to coordinate exchange of good practice, this would be especially useful for countries that are less advanced in housing statistics;

(d) There is a lot of interest in housing data when combined with other characteristics (energy, prices, living conditions, etc.); there are currently no international recommendations addressing this issue, except for housing as part of Consumer Price Indices;

(e) Energy consumption could be considered a priority area in housing statistics: a large part of energy is consumed by dwellings and there is a huge potential for increasing energy efficiency; it would be useful to collect good practices on how to measure energy use in housing;

(f) Another aspect of interest in this area is land use and exposure to natural disasters;

(g) In order to remain relevant in this area, statisticians should look at what data can be produced in the short run to reflect the current crisis (housing prices, wealth, housing construction, use of housing stock);

(h) The use of new technologies could contribute to improving housing statistics (e.g. geo-referencing, spatial data etc.);

(i) Results from population and housing censuses are disseminated as two separate censuses which increases the resources needed for dissemination; there is still time to consider how to improve the dissemination of data from the 2010 round of censuses;

(j) The in-depth review report could consider, in addition to traditional housing statistics, the combination with related issues, like poverty, energy, spatial statistics, etc.;

(k) There are a lot of other activities related to housing that are undertaken outside official statistics at national and international levels: by ministries of housing, researchers, European Central Bank, etc. It will be helpful to make an inventory of these activities, e.g. related to climate change. Eurostat suggested that the link to the academic network on housing researchers should be explored in order to complete the overview.

Conclusions:

7. The Bureau asked Poland to revise the report taking into account the additional notes and comments made by the Bureau and to submit the report to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) plenary session in June 2009.

8. The secretariat will prepare (with the help of Australia, Brazil, Finland, Latvia and Poland) some questions to CES members to identify the priority issues in housing statistics where future work might be undertaken at international level. The work should focus on issues where

international cooperation can add value and where a concrete contribution can be made within a comparatively short period of time. The questions will be distributed in advance of the CES 2009 plenary session. The results of the consultation will be presented for information to the CES plenary session in June 2009. The Bureau will decide on the future work in housing statistics at its October 2009 meeting.

B. Follow-up on agricultural statistics

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/3 (Eurostat), Add.1 (CIS-STAT), Add.2 (World Bank), ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/8 (comments by countries)).

9. The Bureau made an in-depth review of agricultural statistics in October 2008. As a follow-up to the discussion, Eurostat presented a plan for future activities in this area. It was proposed that a 'light' task force be set up including UNECE, Eurostat, OECD, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and a limited number of countries to follow up on the recommended actions by the CES Bureau in the field of agricultural statistics.

10. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The global Expert Meeting on Agriculture Statistics in Washington in October 2008 recognised the current unsatisfactory situation of agricultural statistics and made good progress in drafting the global strategy for agricultural statistics; furthermore, the FAO Statistical Division has been strengthened and statistics is singled out as an important pillar of FAO work;

(b) Participation of the United Nations (UN) regional commissions in implementing the global action plan is necessary. Members of the proposed CES task force should actively participate in the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) Friends of the Chair group (if such a group is set up);

(c) Given the lack of resources, the UNECE secretariat may not be able to represent the region in the work on agricultural statistics at the global level;

(d) The consultation with CES countries showed the need for more international coordination in agricultural statistics; countries expressed strong support for the UNSC initiative to bring this area back on the agenda of international work at the global level; countries stress the need to reduce response burden and integrate agricultural enterprises (farms) into business registers;

(e) There are good possibilities to advance the dissemination of agricultural statistics, based on available macro- and microdata from agricultural censuses using the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) and other standards;

(f) OECD is willing to participate in the task force if it is set up.

Conclusions:

11. The Bureau asked Eurostat to update the in-depth review report on agricultural statistics to

take into account the comments received from the countries. The revised report and the proposal for future work, including the creation of a 'light' task force will be presented to the CES plenary session. FAO will be invited to participate in the discussion.

12. The Bureau recommended that a CES seminar on agriculture statistics be held in 2011, after the discussions at the global level (Rome meeting, International Statistical Institute, UNSC, etc.) have taken place. United States would like to contribute if there will be a CES seminar on agriculture statistics.

C. Follow-up on income, living conditions and poverty

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/4 Rev.1 (Canada), 4/Add.1 (comments by Australia) and 5 (Canada)).

13. The Bureau made an in-depth review of income, living conditions and poverty in October 2007. In the follow-up discussion in October 2008, the Bureau concluded that work is needed in two directions: a narrower focus on practical implementation of the Canberra Group Handbook on household income, and a wider initiative to work towards an integrated framework of income, expenditures and wealth. The terms of reference for a task force to develop guidelines for the practical implementation of the Canberra Group Handbook were presented to the Bureau for approval.

14. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Some countries will update data on income distribution and poverty only in 2011-2012; the topic is of high policy importance and data are required in a much more timely manner; OECD is working in this direction to monitor the impact of current crisis on different population groups;

(b) The task force should limit its work to the implementation of the Canberra Group Handbook and not go into new conceptual work;

(c) The task force should look more closely at the differences of household income as measured in national accounts and in household surveys; harmonization with the national accounts concepts is important;

(d) The group should also discuss the practical questions of what data sources can be used (administrative registers, existing surveys like the European Union (EU) Survey on Income and Living Conditions, Luxembourg Income Study, etc.). However, the work should remain at conceptual level and the task force should not deal with producing data.

15. Furthermore, Canada reported on the outcome of the discussions with United Nations Statistical Division about setting up a possible city group to deal with wider issues of measuring income, expenditures and wealth. Canada will approach other countries to see whether there is sufficient interest to set up a city group and to identify what should be the focus of work.

Conclusions:

16. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the task force subject to taking into account the comments above. The Chair of the task force will be decided at the first meeting of the task force. Finland would also like to participate in the task force. UNECE will provide the secretariat for the task force.

17. The Bureau expressed doubts about the setting up of a city group at a global level.

D. Labour cost

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/FEB/7 (comments by countries)).

18. The Bureau made an in-depth review of statistics on labour cost in October 2008. As a follow-up, the in-depth review report was sent to all CES members for comments.

19. Countries support the need for international coordination and harmonisation in the area. The comments indicate the following issues for harmonisation/standardisation: hours worked and unit of labour cost. The more detailed comments have been forwarded to OECD to be incorporated in the revised version of the in-depth review report.

Conclusions:

20. The Bureau asked OECD to update the in-depth review report on labour cost to take into account countries' comments and to submit it to the CES plenary session in June 2009.

21. The Bureau will follow up on the activities undertaken by international organisations in this area and will come back to the topic if necessary.

E. Process of in-depth reviews by the Bureau

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/6 (UNECE))

22. In October 2008, the Bureau decided that it would be useful to discuss the topics selected for an in-depth review by the Bureau at a CES plenary session prior to the discussion at the Bureau meeting.

23. The new approach will be tested with the topic of statistical dissemination, communication and publications. The secretariat presented an outline of the note that will provide the basis for the discussion at the CES 2009 plenary session.

24. The Bureau considered the outline to be comprehensive. The following additional points to be covered were mentioned: dissemination within the government (how to ensure that other government departments are aware of available statistics and that data are not ignored by policy makers); and communication with researchers.

Conclusions:

25. The Bureau approved the outline of the note on statistical dissemination and communication and requested the UNECE secretariat together with the Steering Group on Statistical Dissemination and Communication to prepare the note for the CES 2009 plenary session.

26. The note should make it clear that the aim of the discussion at the CES plenary session is not to consider the subject matter but to find issues where international cooperation could add value and help statistical offices to meet the challenges in this area. One hour will be devoted to the discussion on this topic at the plenary session.

III. MEETING WITH MR. J. KUBIŠ, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

27. Ms. H. Jeskanen-Sundström welcomed Mr. J. Kubiš, the new Executive Secretary of UNECE. Mr. J. Kubiš noted that this was his first intergovernmental meeting as the Executive Secretary of UNECE. He called CES the hallmark of UNECE and pointed out its long-term good reputation. He noted with satisfaction that the areas that are of top priority for the UNECE are reflected in the CES work, namely making the work relevant to the financial and economic crisis and climate change.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY ISSUES IN INTEGRATED DATASETS

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/9 (Australia, the Chair of the Task Force on Confidentiality and Privacy Issues in Integrated Datasets)).

28. The Bureau discussed the draft *Principles and Guidelines on Confidentiality Aspects of Data Integration Undertaken for Statistical or Related Research Purposes* that were revised after the October 2008 meeting. The Bureau considered the new version of the document to be much improved. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The Bureau recommended not to include the Annex with the so-called old principles 3 and 5;

(b) The Business case outline in Annex 2 should be considered as an example, each country can establish their own template for the process of endorsing data integration projects;

(c) Paragraph 5, 2nd sentence should read: ‘the benefits of integrated data sets could include’;

(d) Paragraph 14 (c): it is not clear who are the stakeholders (OECD will provide the new wording for the paragraph);

(e) Paragraph 19 (d): the sanctions should be enforced as stipulated in legislation, not necessarily linked to the laws of the country of residence (OECD will provide the new wording);

(f) The use of words that have a somewhat different meaning in Australia, Europe and US has to be clarified, such as 'must' vs 'should', confronting = validating data sources, undertaking = contract, etc. United States will help with the editing of the final text.

Conclusions:

29. The two old principles provided in Annex 1 will not be included in the Principles.
30. The secretariat will send out the electronic version of the text to the Bureau so that the Bureau members can include their proposed corrections with 'track changes'. The secretariat will consolidate all changes.
31. The Bureau decided that the approved text of the *Principles and Guidelines on Confidentiality Aspects of Data Integration Undertaken for Statistical or Related Research Purposes* will be sent to all CES members for electronic consultation. The Bureau requested that the document be submitted to the CES 2009 plenary session for eventual endorsement.

V. MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NEW TASK FORCE

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/10 (UNECE, Eurostat, OECD, Canada and Netherlands)).

32. The Bureau discussed a revised version of the terms of reference for the creation of a new task force on measuring sustainable development. The new version took into account the comments made at the October 2008 Bureau meeting. The draft that was presented to the Bureau was the result of a consultation with Eurostat, OECD, Canada (the Chair of the previous Task Force on measuring sustainable development) and the Netherlands (the proposed Chair of the new task force).
33. It was noted that the current version of the Terms of Reference is a good compromise of the various views concerning the mandate of the new task force.

Conclusions:

34. The terms of reference were approved. Canada and the United States expressed interest in participating in the task force.
35. The new task force is planned to be composed of a limited number of people (about 15-25 members). Experts from countries and international organizations who have expertise in human capital, social capital and in the capital approach in general will be invited as members of the task force. Statistics Netherlands will provide the Editor of the final report. A project plan should be finalized by the end of March 2009. The first meeting of the new task force is planned to be held during the third week of September 2009.

VI. CHALLENGES IN MANAGING THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN STATISTICAL OFFICES

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/11 (Norway, Chair of the Steering Group on Managing Statistical Information Systems (MSIS)), Add.1 (Steering Group on MSIS)).

36. The discussion was based on a note on challenges in managing information systems in statistical organizations prepared by the Steering Group on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS), and an addendum on specific issues relating to sharing statistical software. The Chair of the Steering Group on MSIS presented the note.

37. The following points were made in the discussion:

Challenges in managing information systems in statistical organizations

(a) Software licensing and intellectual property issues were raised; open-source solutions reduce these problems;

(b) The e-government policies may constrain statistical offices in developing their own systems;

(c) Some topics listed under “Governance” in the note (e.g. sourcing strategies, statistics and e-government) are rather specific to national circumstances; it is proposed to focus on topics where experiences and approaches could more easily be shared between countries (e.g. web collection and direct data transfers from the accounting systems of businesses);

(d) High-level standardization of business process models is supported but this should not be too prescriptive. Flexibility is needed, otherwise development may be constrained. A service-oriented, modular approach to business architectures can be a good approach;

(e) A fast developing area is the creation of virtual databases and technology that allows to keep "data at the source" with a common interface (e.g. EU, OECD and IMF are doing related work). This approach stimulates the reuse of existing data and should be mentioned in the note as it may have an impact on the business processes and information architecture;

(f) Data accessibility becomes the crucial question in collecting and manipulating data from different sources. Metadata aspects are very important in this respect and the development of efficient tools for end users is required;

(g) The MSIS meeting should invite as participants also the owners of statistical business processes.

Software sharing

(a) The software sharing portal (the open source observatory and repository) should be accessible also outside the EU;

- (b) The discussion on software sharing is not limited to NSOs only, the shared development of statistical software can also involve input from commercial providers where appropriate;
- (c) The work should complement the international work on statistical visualisation tools;
- (d) Software sharing requires long-term commitment, it has to be carefully monitored to assess the progress and risks against specific milestones;
- (e) The output of the Sharing Advisory Board and the scope of its activities should be clearly specified in the terms of reference.

Conclusions:

38. United States will forward some specific comments on the note and addendum to the UNECE secretariat. The MSIS Steering Group will update the note to take into account the comments by the Bureau. The note will then be communicated to the MSIS meeting in May 2009.

39. The proposal for the creation of the Sharing Advisory Board will also be discussed at the MSIS meeting in May 2009. Following the meeting, the terms of reference will be submitted to the Bureau for approval.

VII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2009 PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

A. Outline for the seminar: “Balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate to produce policy relevant data”

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/12 (Ireland)).

40. An updated outline of the seminar was presented to the Bureau. The Bureau noted that the seminar outline is very interesting and focuses on the right questions.

41. The following points were made in the discussion:

Session I

(a) As the session is expected to trigger a lot of discussion, it may be helpful to structure the discussion in such a way as to look even more in detail at the boundaries of official statistics; this is a key area of debate and may need more time;

(b) The session could discuss more on the issue of impartiality and its protocols; Eurostat volunteered to make a contribution on that;

(c) Reconciling official statistics and official data produced by other parts of the government (e.g. data on greenhouse gas emissions) is a challenge which may require special

agreements and communication strategies; for the users it may be difficult to understand whether the produced data are official statistics or not;

(d) A possible element to be considered is the contradiction between official statistics coming from national sources and produced by international sources (e.g. data on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs));

Session II

(a) The session focuses on the non-statistical activities of statistical offices and the potential synergies that this can bring to statistical work. The questions related to data produced outside the official statistical system should be discussed under session I;

(b) Paragraph 16b: some opinion data are part of official statistics (consumer expectations surveys, European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC)); it will be interesting to discuss such borderline cases; however, there is not yet any contribution offered on that topic;

(c) A related issue is data collection from children;

(d) The session is planned to cover many points (analysis, registers, etc.) and may lose focus, a solution could be to discuss the urgent issues and not deal with questions that are also challenging but not so urgent;

(e) Some time for general discussion should also be allocated during sessions I-III.

Conclusions:

42. The Bureau approved the outline of the seminar subject to the comments above. The following countries and organisations are requested to prepare notes for the seminar providing the basis for discussion: Australia (2), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Latvia, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Eurostat, UNECE.

B. Outline for the seminar “Strategic issues in business statistics”

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/13 (Canada and Eurostat)).

43. The Bureau discussed the updated outline prepared by Canada and Eurostat and agreed with the general plan for the seminar. The following comments were made in the discussion:

(a) The Session Organiser/Discussant will base his/her summary mainly on the invited documents but can include also ideas from contributed papers;

(b) Eurostat’s work on entrepreneurship would deserve special attention because it is the first time when data on entrepreneurship are produced according to an agreed framework;

(c) Currently all invited documents (except one) are from Europe; it would be good to have notes also from outside the European Statistical System; United States offered to look for an additional note from the U.S.

Conclusions:

44. The Bureau approved the outline of the seminar subject to comments above. The following countries and organisations are requested to prepare notes for the seminar providing the basis for discussion: Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, United States Bureau of Economic Analysis, Eurostat.

45. All CES members will be asked to contribute papers for the seminar. There is no limit to the number of contributed papers.

46. The time for the seminar is limited and will require strong discipline from the Seminar and Session Organisers. The organisers should have a briefing with all people involved in the seminar to ensure that the time limits are kept.

C. Preparation of the formal session, draft agenda and timetable for the 2009 plenary session

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/14 (UNECE)).

47. The Bureau discussed the updated provisional agenda of the CES 2009 plenary session. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The in-depth reviews should start with housing statistics and more time should be allocated for that topic. The order will be thus the following: housing statistics, agriculture statistics, and statistics on labour cost;

(b) The information on the outcomes of the in-depth reviews on agriculture and labour statistics can be reduced by 5-10 minutes;

(c) A possibility is to move the item on the outcomes of the three in-depth reviews to Tuesday, 9 June morning, before the seminar on strategic issues in business statistics;

(d) The title of item 5(b) will be 'in-depth review of statistical dissemination, communication and publications'.

Conclusions:

48. The Bureau approved the provisional agenda of the Conference's 2009 plenary session subject to the comments above.

VIII. WORK OF THE CONFERENCE'S TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS

A. Guidelines on migration statistics

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/15 and Add.1 (Task Force on Migration Statistics), Add.2 (comments by countries)).

49. The *Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries* were submitted to the Bureau for approval. The Bureau considered the document a realistic description of the situation and useful for the future work in countries.

Conclusions:

50. The Bureau asked the Task Force to revise the Guidelines to take into account the comments received from the Bureau members before the meeting. A short text should be added to the tables explaining that these are not obligatory reporting requirements but an example in which direction to develop in future. Currently all countries may have some problems in reporting these data.

51. The Bureau decided that the Guidelines will be sent for written consultation to all members of the Conference. The document will be submitted to the 2009 plenary session of the Conference for eventual endorsement.

B. Manual on victimisation surveys

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/16 and Add.1 (Task Force on Victim Surveys)).

52. The Bureau considered the draft *Manual on Victimisation Surveys*. The Manual is a result of four years work by qualified experts and has been broadly consulted by countries. Resources are still needed for final English editing of the document.

53. There is a proposal for future work in this area to work together with the European Commission and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on crime classification for statistical purposes.

Conclusions:

54. The Bureau decided that the Manual will be sent to all members of the Conference for electronic consultation. The Manual will be submitted to the CES 2009 plenary session for eventual endorsement. Eurostat confirmed its willingness to help with the final English editing of the Manual.

55. The terms of reference for new work on crime classification for statistical purposes will be submitted to the next Bureau meeting for approval.

C. Framework for measuring quality of work

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/17 and Add.1 (Task Force on measuring quality of employment), Add.2 (comments by Australia)).

56. The Bureau considered the draft framework to measure the various quality aspects of employment, prepared by the Task Force on measuring the quality of employment. A validation study of the indicators will be carried out in 2009. The work is planned to be finalised in 2009 and the final report to be submitted to the Conference for endorsement in 2010.

57. The following comments were made in the discussion:

(a) Several of the proposed indicators in the framework are subjective rather than objective and include a value judgement, this might compromise statistical impartiality; the concern can be addressed by careful use of the terminology, and explaining to users the sensitive nature of some indicators;

(b) The Task Force stems from the work done by ILO and the European Union in this area which is politically driven; the aim is to develop common guidelines from a statistical perspective that would allow to provide neutral and comprehensive information to inform policy makers and the general public;

(c) The framework will not be a standard but rather a best practice guideline to countries to produce quality of work indicators, it identifies a common framework and a pool of tested appropriate indicators;

(d) Consider extending the income dimension to households rather than limiting it to individual level;

(e) It would be useful to analyze which of the indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) can be used in international comparison, it can be expected that users will compare data when the same indicators are available for different countries.

Conclusions:

58. The Task Force will incorporate the comments by the Bureau in the framework as much as possible. The Bureau looks forward for the results of the validation study namely on a guidance of which indicators are more useful for international comparison. The final report is planned to be submitted to the Conference in 2010.

D. Emerging issues in social statistics; families and households and measuring volunteer work

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/18 (Canada, the Chair of the Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics), Add.1 (comments by Australia)).

59. The Bureau was informed of the progress made by the Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics and the two Task Forces working under its umbrella (Task Force on families and households and Task Force on measurement of volunteer work).

60. Both Task Forces plan to complete their work in 2009.

Conclusions:

61. The Task Forces will present the final report of the work by the end of 2009.

IX. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN STATISTICAL OFFICES

Documentation: Informal documents (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/19 (UNECE), Add.1 (comments by Australia)).

62. The Bureau discussed the proposal for future work on human resources and training. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Some of the related issues will be also discussed by the human resources directors of statistical agencies of the EU countries, the CES work should not overlap with this discussion; the work should take into account the broader perspective of the CES member countries;

(b) A new professional identity of a survey methodologist is emerging which requires specific competencies, United States can share information on that;

(c) Staff in statistical offices may know well their area of specialisation but sometimes do not know how the statistical offices operate in general, training may be needed to understand a broader perspective of statistical agencies.

Conclusions:

63. The Bureau supported the proposal for future work and the organisation of a workshop on human resources and training in statistical offices in 2010.

64. Australia, Canada, Finland, United States and World Bank expressed willingness to contribute to the workshop.

65. The World Bank offered to share its e-learning course used in statistical capacity building, and to finance the participation of some representatives from developing countries at the workshop.

X. PRESENTATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

66. In the series of presentations by international organisations, ILO presented its statistical activities to the Bureau.

67. The current focus of ILO work is on decent jobs and the kinds of economic and working conditions that give all people a stake in lasting peace, prosperity and progress. The statistical activities can be grouped into five main areas: standards setting, capacity building, compilation and dissemination of statistics and labour market indicators, statistical analysis, and provision of statistical services to ILO users.

68. The ILO Bureau of Statistics is carrying out activities in these five areas and is monitoring the implementation of the Labour Statistics Convention (C160) and liaising with the international statistical system. However, many statistical activities are implemented in other parts of ILO, including the five regional departments. There are no formal mechanisms to coordinate the activities but this situation is expected to improve in near future.

69. Possible areas for future developmental work are: the changing structure of labour force, informal employment, labour productivity and labour inputs to national accounts, child labour and forced labour, the labour statistics framework, volunteer work, labour under-utilisation, measurement of decent work, harmonised framework for wages statistics, labour migration statistics, and revision of resolutions on the status of employment, economically active population and social security. ILO is working closely with other international players in all these areas.

70. A request was expressed for support to ILO work by the CES members.

Conclusions:

71. The Bureau invited ILO to be involved in the Task Force on practical implementation of the Canberra Group Handbook.

XI. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2008 STATISTICAL PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/20 (UNECE)).

72. A short report on the work accomplished by the UNECE Statistical Division in 2008 was presented to the Bureau.

Conclusions:

73. The Bureau approved the report and congratulated the UNECE Statistical Division with the work well done. The success of the joint work with other international organisations (Eurostat, OECD, ILO, IMF, World Bank, other United Nations agencies, etc.) is due to the good cooperation and support from these organisations.

XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Meeting of the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians with the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

74. The Bureau was informed about the outcome of the regular meeting of the Chair of the CES with the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) that took place on 21 November 2008. The EXCOM expressed support to the UNECE Statistical Programme 2009 (the areas mentioned in particular were: gender, environment, and sustainable development statistics, and measuring of quality of employment).

Conclusions:

75. The Bureau agreed that in future when the EXCOM considers the CES work, the secretariat will alert the Bureau members beforehand so that they can brief the relevant country delegations in Geneva.

B. Information on the database of international statistical activities

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/21 (UNECE)).

76. The Bureau was informed that the 2009 version of the Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA) had been made available on Internet. Information on all international organizations is included, except for the European Environment Agency which is delayed. A new statistical activity: 3.3.7 Climate change has been added to DISA classification. Furthermore, the technical platform for the database has been changed and work is being undertaken to improve its presentation and functionality.

77. The Bureau was informed that ECLAC had set up a similar database for the Latin American region using the know-how of DISA. Furthermore, Mexico has also contacted the secretariat with the intention to use the same tool for internal coordination of the many statistical activities undertaken by various international organisations in Mexico.

Conclusions:

78. The Bureau asked the secretariat that the collection of information for DISA from the international organisations be coordinated between UNECE and ECLAC.

C. Follow-up to decisions

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/22 (UNECE)).

79. A note on follow-up to the decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference was presented for information. The work is on schedule.

XIII. FREQUENCY OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS BUREAU MEETINGS. DATES AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BUREAU MEETINGS

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/23 (UNECE)).

80. The Bureau discussed the frequency of the Bureau meetings based on an example agenda for a hypothetical once-per-year meeting, prepared by the secretariat at the request of the Bureau.

81. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) A proposal was made that the meetings be reorganised in the following way, starting after the plenary session in June 2009: one 2-3 day meeting in late autumn, one 1-day meeting back-to-back with the CES plenary session, and if necessary, a 2-3 hours meeting in conjunction with the United Nations Statistical Commission in New York in February-March;

(b) The Russian Federation strongly objected to changing the frequency of the Bureau meetings on the grounds that this could diminish the role of the Bureau in coordination of international statistical work;

(c) A 3-day meeting may prove to be too exhaustive; on the other hand, this will allow more opportunities for bilateral discussions;

(d) The adoption of the UNECE Statistical Programme has to be taken into account in scheduling the meeting(s);

(e) The Bureau's involvement in the preparation of the CES seminars could be improved, the discussion should start in June and the final outline should be agreed early enough so that authors have sufficient time to prepare the notes;

(f) A formal written procedure could be considered for endorsing the manuals, guidelines, etc.;

(g) The written consultations have to be well organised, sometimes it is difficult to explain to staff in NSOs why they have to comment on the same issue repeatedly;

(h) Some of the issues need several discussions by the Bureau before they are brought to conclusion, written discussion can not always adequately substitute face-to-face discussions;

(i) The question of the frequency of the meetings should be consulted also with the new Bureau members who will be elected in June 2009 for the 2009-2011 period.

Conclusions:

82. The Bureau agreed to experiment with the following timing of the Bureau meetings: 2 days meeting in October-November, 1-day meeting back-to-back with the CES plenary session, and a short meeting during the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) session if necessary.

This approach will be tested starting from 2010 for the following 2 years. Depending on the outcome, the Bureau will decide whether to return to the 2 meetings in February and October.

83. The permanent change in the frequency of meetings would require a formal change in the Rules governing the work of the Conference and the Bureau, which has to be approved by the Conference at a plenary session. The Rules should be also submitted for formal approval to the EXCOM.

84. The secretariat will consider how the work will have to be reorganised to take into account the changed timing and frequency of the Bureau meetings.

85. A lunch meeting of the 2007-2009 Bureau is planned to be held on Tuesday, 9 June 2009 during the CES 2009 plenary session, based on the existing rules.

86. A preliminary Bureau lunch meeting is planned for 11 June 2010.

87. Russian Federation offered to host the meeting in October 2009 in Sankt Petersburg. The World Bank and IMF confirmed their readiness to host future Bureau meetings in Washington, D.C.

88. The Bureau confirmed that the October 2009 meeting will take place on 15-16 October 2009. The secretariat will clarify the organisational matters with Russian Federation and the CIS Statistical Committee. Washington will be kept as a backup possibility.

89. The Bureau did not confirm the traditional meeting of two days for February 2010. A possible lunch meeting could be organised during the UNSC session on 23 February 2010 (backup 24 February).

XIV. STATISTICS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE – FOLLOW-UP TO DISCUSSION IN OCTOBER 2008

Documentation: Informal document (ECE/CES/BUR/2009/FEB/24 (UNECE)).

90. The Bureau discussed the possible involvement of the CES in work related to climate change statistics, taking into account the outcomes of the meeting held in Korea in December 2008 and in view of the Programme Review report prepared by Australia for the 2009 UNSC session.

91. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The proposal for future work by Conference on climate change statistics is not very clear;

(b) The UNECE is undertaking or envisaging work related to climate change in the following areas: transport, energy, forestry and housing; combining this with statistics will be a good opportunity for intersectoral work;

(c) Statisticians have very little possibilities to influence the methodologies for calculating greenhouse gas emissions which are currently the responsibility of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); furthermore, the national inventories are maintained by other government agencies and the communication with statistics is not always good;

(d) Statisticians can improve the quality of the data used for the calculations: the timeliness, methods of nowcasting, etc.;

(e) Correction to §17: not all experts agree that the methodologies for calculating greenhouse gas emissions are inadequate for national and sub-regional levels, the methods can be used at these levels;

(f) The problems with calculating the emissions for maritime and air transport may be solved when the Kyoto protocol (ending in 2012) will be extended, it is likely that the reporting system will be changed;

(g) Possible future work should not be limited by the work plans at the global level but should also look at what is relevant for the UNECE countries; the fact that greenhouse gas inventories are compiled outside official statistics could pose questions how this will be perceived by the general public when this information will be used for operational decisions;

(h) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is working with academic type of data and it is difficult to translate these results into policies in different fields because of the different classifications used; some work is going on under the framework of the National Accounts Matrix with Environmental Accounts (NAMEA) to map the classifications;

(i) Any future CES work in this area should take into account the IPCC, UNFCCC activities, and other institutions dealing with the related data (e.g. Århus convention);

(j) It would be good to have some focal point for official statistics to cooperate with UNFCCC.

Conclusions:

92. The Bureau decided that before taking any final decisions on the CES involvement in this area, it is necessary to wait for the outcomes of the discussion at the United Nations Statistical Commission. UNECE work related to climate change will be also discussed at the UNECE Commission session in March.

93. The Bureau asked the secretariat to prepare a note describing the activities of other UNECE Sectoral Committees related to climate change.

94. Furthermore, the Bureau asked for a short note to be prepared describing the current climate change inventory system. Eurostat will look whether anything suitable is already available. Finland will also provide some information.

95. Following the discussion at the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2009, the secretariat will prepare a short (1-page) questionnaire to the CES members. Its aim is to find out how the national statistical offices are involved in climate change related work and in compiling the greenhouse gas inventories, and whether there are any common concerns that can be dealt with at international level.

96. The Bureau will discuss the future CES work on climate change at its next meeting based on these two notes, the consultation with countries, and the outcomes of the UNSC discussion on this issue in February 2009.

XV. OTHER BUSINESS

97. The Steering Group on Dissemination and Communication is preparing a *Style Guide for Visual Presentation of Statistics*. The Guide will be sent to the Bureau for electronic consultation after the meeting.

98. The UNECE has recently been assigned a new post (P3 level) through the so-called 'Development pillar' package to set up the MDG regional database and contribute to the work on reducing the differences between national and international MDG data.

99. The Terms of Reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators were approved by the Committee on Environmental Policy.

100. The Bureau decided on the papers to be made available on Internet.

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