

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

For decision

Third meeting of the 2005/2006 Bureau  
Geneva, 20-21 February 2006

Item 9 of the Provisional  
Agenda

**PROPOSAL FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS OF THE STATISTICAL DIVISION'S  
WORK ON PUBLIC DATABASES**

**Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat**

1. In view of the reform of the UNECE, it is proposed that an external assessment of the Statistical Division's work on the public databases should be undertaken in 2006.
2. It is proposed that two separate assessments be carried out:
  - i) **An external assessment of the content and the functionality of the public database.** The assessment should be conducted in or around June 2006. A report of the assessment should be finalized in September 2006 in order to be presented to the meeting of the Bureau in October 2006. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the content as well as the functionality of the databases. The result of the assessment shall be used for the further improvement and development of the databases.
  - ii) **An external assessment of the production process for the public databases.** The assessment should be conducted in May or June 2007. A report of the assessment should be finalized in September 2007 in order to be presented to the meeting of the Bureau in October 2007. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the working processes for updating and maintaining the public databases and suggest improvements that may help to increase the efficiency of the data work.
3. To undertake the assessments, the Bureau is invited to agree to appoint from among the national statistical offices of the member countries:
  - three persons with expert knowledge within economic statistics, gender statistics and on-line data dissemination to conduct the evaluation of the content and functionality of the databases;
  - two or three persons with expert knowledge within production of on-line databases to conduct the evaluation of the production process for the public databases. One of the experts, at least, should come from an international institution.
4. For both assessments, the work should be chaired by one of the appointed experts. Both assessments are expected to require 2 to 3 working weeks of the involved experts, including a stay with the Statistical Division for up to one working week.

## **BACKGROUND**

5. The background for the proposal is to be found in the Work Plan on ECE Reform. In the Subprogramme on Statistics it is stated that:

“In order to provide Member States with user-oriented statistics, the Conference of European Statisticians shall submit proposals to the Executive Committee on the actual production of Member States statistics. The contents of the online database shall be reviewed and improved accordingly.

The functioning and accessibility of the online database shall be improved in order to facilitate the dissemination of statistics.”

And further that

“The resources allocated to the processing of data by this Subprogramme shall be reduced due to the overall reduction of activities in the field of economic analysis.”

6. The Statistical Division has two internal databases (the so-called *production* databases) where processed and validated data are stored. There is one production database with economic statistics, and one production database with gender statistics. There is no external access to the production databases. The publicly available databases are formed on the basis of the production databases.

7. So far, only part of the economic database has been made publicly available, providing data for national accounts only. However, the Statistical Division is currently in the process of preparing the upload of new data series to the public databases in the first half of 2006. The databases will be uploaded with series for national accounts and other main economic indicators, and gender statistics. It is thus expected that the public databases will provide a broad set of data within these areas as from the middle of 2006.

8. The assessment of the content and the functionality of the databases should be conducted after the new series has been made available in the public databases, i.e. in or around June 2006. This will allow for a critical revision of both the content and functionality of the economic and the gender databases.

9. For practical and resource reasons, the assessment of the production processes is suggested to take place in May or June 2007, so as not to coincide with the assessment of the content and functionality of the databases.

## **OUTLINE OF THE ASSESSMENTS OF THE CONTENT AND THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE PUBLIC DATABASES.**

10. As regard the contents of the databases, the following issues should be evaluated:
- the usefulness and relevance of data (concerning the coverage of statistical areas, countries and regions and the level of breakdown of data);
  - periodicity;
  - timeliness; and

- metadata.

The functionality of the databases should be evaluated according to:

- ease of access,
- overview,
- the possibility to retrieve data and
- user friendliness in general.

11. The assessment should include a survey on relevant external and internal users' evaluation of the databases, with the weight on external users. A proposal for issues that may be covered by such a survey is provided in ANNEX 1 below.

12. The evaluation should pay particular attention to those statistical areas where the databases provide, or should provide, information that cannot be obtained from other publicly available databases. This may help the Division to identify areas where value added can be provided. The assessment should also provide proposals for improvements and further developments, for example more detailed information in areas already covered or new areas to be included.

#### **OUTLINE OF THE ASSESSMENTS OF THE PRODUCTION PROCESS FOR THE PUBLIC DATABASES**

13. The assessment of the production process for the public databases should evaluate in principle all stages of production. This will include data collection methods, stages of updating and processing of data, and data evaluation. The analysis should help the Statistical Division to identify where the efficiency of the production process or the data quality can be improved.

## ANNEX 1

### PROPOSAL OF ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THE DATABASES

#### The content of the database

**1. The coverage of statistical areas**

Does the data cover the most relevant/important statistical areas; Are there other areas that should be included? Specific areas that should be improved in terms of additional or other indicators?

**2. The coverage of countries**

Does the data cover the most relevant/important countries? Are regional aggregates appropriate?

**3. The level of detail**

Is the breakdown of series appropriate? Specific series where the level of disaggregation should be increased/decreased?

**4. Time**

The appropriateness of the periodicity of the time series, the length of the series and timeliness?

**5. Metadata**

Are metadata appropriate and sufficient?

**6. Value added**

Does the database provide information that cannot be obtained from publicly available databases of other international organizations? New areas where such information should be provided?

**7. Summary**

Summary of the major advantages and disadvantages as regards the content of the database.

**8. Proposals**

Proposal to improve the relevance and/or usefulness of the content of the database?

#### The functionality of the database

**1. Overall functionality**

Evaluation of the overall functionality of the database in terms of user friendliness, ease of access, the possibilities to retrieve data and the general overview.

**2. Proposals**

Proposal to improve the functionality/user friendliness of the database?

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