

First meeting of the 2009/2010 Bureau
Washington, D.C., 15-16 October 2009

Item 3(d) of the Provisional
Agenda

**UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2009:
ACTIVITY 5.5. SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC STATISTICS**

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. The UNECE has worked in the area of seasonal adjustment of short-term economic statistics (STS) since 2005. The work has focused on the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and Western Balkans because the lack of seasonally adjusted short-term statistics is one of the major obstacles for international comparison of the economic development in this region. Currently, the UNECE publishes seasonally adjusted industrial production indices for countries which do not perform seasonal adjustment themselves.
2. In order to find out the specific needs of countries in this area, the UNECE conducted in 2009 a survey on seasonal adjustment in EECCA and Western Balkan countries. The objective was to obtain more information on the current practices and future plans in order to provide relevant support for the countries.
3. A more detailed report of the survey outcomes, and a report on the international comparability of short-term statistics in the EECCA and Western Balkan countries are available at: www.unece.org/stats/archive/02.08.e.htm

**II. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY ON SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT IN
WESTERN BALKANS AND CIS COUNTRIES**

4. The survey questionnaire was sent to national statistical offices and central banks in the EECCA and Western Balkan countries. Eleven answers were received from ten different countries (ten from statistical offices and one from a central bank). 11 countries out of 17 published some seasonally adjusted time series, while in 2007 it was only two countries. However, seasonally adjusted data are still usually available for only a few selected time series, varying from country to country.
5. All countries reported that they have limited capacity to do seasonal adjustment and that the main obstacle to introducing seasonal adjustment is the lack of technical and methodological knowledge. All countries reported a need for assistance in terms of training courses and methodological guidelines on seasonal adjustment, preferably in Russian. The countries are aware of the growing interest from users in acquiring seasonally adjusted data.

6. The length of time series appears to be problematically short in many countries that reported production of seasonally adjusted data. The release practices of seasonally adjusted data differ between the countries and the available metadata is often limited. The X-12-ARIMA method is the most common approach among the EECCA and Western Balkan countries, while TRAMO/SEATS is the most common tool in the European Union countries. Not all countries update their seasonal adjustment models regularly and the use of quality indicators is not yet well established.

III. PLANS FOR FUTURE WORK

7. The UNECE is preparing a training and capacity building program for 2009-2010 on short-term economic statistics. The program is aimed at the Central Asian and other CIS countries, financed by the World Bank.

8. The program consists of three workshops during which training and exercises on STS will be provided, based on international recommendations. The first 5-day workshop is planned to take place before the end of 2009. It will focus on time series methodology, dissemination practices and seasonal adjustment. The second workshop in 2010 will be a continuation of the first workshop, going into more detail on seasonal adjustment methods and practices. The third workshop in late 2010 will focus on the compilation of consumer price indices.

9. The content of the workshops has been tailored according to the needs of the countries to improve international comparability of short-term economic statistics. Thus, the workshops will address general issues on international comparability, the production of long and coherent time series, use of multiple data sources, efficient data editing and improvement of dissemination practices.

10. The UNECE guidance on seasonal adjustment will follow international recommendations, taking the European Statistical System (ESS) Guidelines on Seasonal Adjustment as a reference, with a focus on practical problems and user friendly solutions. Methodological material and practical guidelines will be prepared in English and Russian based on the experiences from the workshops and the broader international work on seasonal adjustment.

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