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**TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES COVERED BY THE UNECE STATISTICAL  
DIVISION FOR THE PERIOD JUNE 2002-MAY 2003**

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The UNECE Statistical Division has a long tradition of technical cooperation activities with member countries. The Regional Adviser on statistics carries out these activities, in collaboration with other professional staff of the Statistical Division. Within the UNECE region, countries with economies in transition are the main beneficiaries of this cooperation.
2. The process of transition among the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has reached very different stages of development. Eight transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe will become members of the European Union in less than one year. These countries are now recognised as having market economies and are adjusting their economic and social infrastructure to the EU framework known as “acquis communautaire”, including the statistical acquis. The official granting of the status of market economy by EU to Russia in May 2002 has marked the progress towards the integration of the EU and Russia within a “common European economic space”.
3. The situation is very different in Southeast Europe where countries are facing economic and social difficulties in their progress towards a market economy. Some of them are more advanced, while others are experiencing strong internal political tensions. In the CIS countries, leaving aside Russia, there is considerable diversity among countries in their progress towards a market economy. This calls for a

tailored development of statistics in the region, supported by a sustained technical cooperation effort by the international organisations that are active in the region.

4. Two important events that took place at the world level in 2002 have had an impact on the demand for statistical information in the ECE region, especially in the countries that are dealing with critical development issues in Southeast Europe and in the CIS. The first event is the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The UN Secretary General presented his first report to the UN General Assembly on 1 October 2002. The report will be presented annually. As a result, the UNDP received the assignment of leading the UN efforts to coordinate the MDG campaign and the country-level monitoring activities associated with it. The second event is the World Summit on Sustainable Development that was held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002. A plan of implementation of sustainable development was adopted with concrete commitments, targets, and timetables at the level of countries and regions.

5. Against this background, the UNECE and other international organisations have devoted a significant amount of human and financial resources to the development of economic and social statistics in Southeast Europe and the CIS.

6. A new European Union programme has replaced PHARE in Southeast Europe. The implementation of this new programme, called CARDS, has taken more time than was initially planned, but is now starting in all countries of the sub-region. Beyond the European Union, the international community, including UNECE, the Council of Europe, UNDP, IMF and the World Bank, is devoting attention and resources to strengthening the statistical capacity in these countries.

7. The EU TACIS programme is a major source of technical cooperation in statistics in the CIS countries with the exception of Belarus and Tajikistan. UNECE and other international organisations such as UNDP, IMF, World Bank and the CIS Inter-State Statistical Committee are also active in the region. At the same time, OECD is withdrawing from providing technical assistance in statistics to the CIS countries due to re-orientation of its strategy.

## **II. UNECE TECHNICAL COOPERATION**

### **Bilateral activities**

8. At the request of national authorities and/or international organisations that are active in the country, the UNECE Statistical Division cooperates with individual member countries in order to strengthen their statistical capacity. Priority is given to countries from Southeast Europe and the CIS.

- **Albania**

At the request of the UNDP country office in Albania, the Institute of Statistics of Albania was visited in March 2003 to assess the capacity of the official statistical system to produce indicators for monitoring the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the country.

- **Belarus**

At the request of the national authorities, the Ministry of Analysis and Statistics of Belarus was visited in June 2002. Several specific issues raised by national statisticians were discussed, and advice for further improvements was provided.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

At the request of the UNDP country office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a mid-term evaluation of the UNDP project “Building the Basis for a Statistical System in Bosnia and Herzegovina” was conducted in September 2002. The evaluation report was accepted by the UNDP country office in November 2002 and circulated to national and international agencies that are active in the field of statistics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

9. In cooperation with Eurostat, a global assessment of the national statistical system of Bosnia and Herzegovina was carried out in spring 2003. The final report was sent for approval to the national statistical authorities at the beginning of June 2003.

- **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Over the period, the UNECE Statistical Division has continued to actively participate in the Steering Committee of the Census Monitoring and Observation Mission in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), in cooperation with the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

### **Multilateral activities**

10. Technical assistance is also provided in the form of sub-regional workshops and training organised in specific statistical areas for countries from Southeast Europe and the CIS. So far, UNDP, Eurostat and the OECD have been the main donors of financial assistance to enable low-income countries with economies in transition to participate in these workshops and training.

- **National accounts**

Special seminars and work sessions have been organised for countries with economies in transition in the area of national accounts, back-to-back with regular meetings of national accounts experts. A special session for transition economies was organised on 23 April 2002 in Geneva. The main topics for discussion were (i) benchmarking/extrapolation in quarterly national accounts; and (ii) ongoing work on estimation of hidden and informal activities in transition economies. Another similar ECE session was organised on 11 October 2002 in Paris back-to-back with the OECD meeting on national accounts. The topics for discussion were: (i) revision of national accounts time series; (ii) estimation of capital stock; and (iii) on-going work on hidden and informal economies.

- **Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**

A seminar on the application of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the context of transition was organised for CIS statistical offices at the Agency on Statistics of Kazakhstan on 28 and 29 April 2003. Funding was provided by the World Bank.

- **Human development statistics and social trends reporting**

UNECE and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS (RBEC) have established a joint project on “Human Development Statistics and Social Trends Reporting in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS”. The UNECE is the executing agency and UNDP provided funding. In 2002/2003, activities have been focused on the strengthening of the statistical basis of national human development reports, and the training of human development analysts in the use of statistics.

11. In cooperation with the UNDP RBEC Support Centre in Bratislava, a core set of standard statistical indicators for national human development reports has been worked out and submitted to national statisticians and human development analysts from Southeast Europe and the CIS.

12. Two sub-regional workshops were organised with statisticians from Southeast Europe, Western CIS and Russia (Sofia, September 2002), South-Caucasus and Central Asia (Tbilisi, October 2002). The reports of the workshops are posted on the website of the UNECE Statistical Division.

13. A second series of workshops were organised in Bratislava for the human development focal points in UNDP country offices from Southeast Europe (5 – 7 May 2003) and the CIS (8 – 10 May 2003). The workshops were dedicated to: (i) discussion of the amended set of standard statistical indicators for human development reports; and (ii) the presentation of some best practices in using statistics for analytical purposes.

- **Gender statistics**

The UNECE/UNDP project also includes an important component on gender statistics. Over the period, the regional website on gender statistics has been regularly updated and expanded. A Task Force meeting on the gender statistics website was held in Geneva on 25 and 26 September 2002.

- **Millennium Development Goals indicators**

The development of national reports on progress toward achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is raising new demands of national statisticians. In cooperation with UNDP, MDG indicators have been incorporated into the proposal of standard statistical indicators for national human development reports, and discussed with human development analysts in the Bratislava workshops.