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COMMENTS ON THE
2004 INTEGRATED PRESENTATION
OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK PROGRAMMES

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. This note summarises the written comments received by the ECE secretariat on the 2004 version of the “Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work Programmes”, which is available in database format at <http://unece.unog.ch/IntPres/>
2. Members of the Conference were asked for comments in April 2004 with the aim of identifying possible gaps and to ensure that the work of the international agencies is relevant to the needs of the countries. This note is prepared for discussion at the June 2004 plenary version of the Conference of European Statisticians, in support of the discussion under agenda item 3: “Integrated Presentation”.
3. Comments were submitted by: Armenia, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Latvia, Mexico, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland.
4. The following countries communicated that they had no comments on the IP: Estonia, Hungary and Japan. The European Central Bank and the FAO asked to amend the text describing their activities in selected programme elements.
5. General comments, not related to a specific section (or “programme element”) of the IP, are presented first. Specific comments, related to various programme elements of the IP are presented following the usual order of the IP classification.

General comments on the Integrated Presentation

6. Comments by Germany: In general, we welcome the statistical activities. The impact on national statistical offices is somehow difficult to evaluate. For us, it is very important that priorities are well-defined. Duplication of work should be avoided. Therefore, the international organizations should place their emphasis on areas where fundamental discussions are still necessary and build up on work which is already available.

7. Since the IP is very comprehensive, we welcome the idea to reduce the IP elements to the points "issues and problems" and "attention is drawn to" from 2005 onwards (as is indicated in document CES/2004/3).

8. Comment by Mexico: We strongly support the efforts you are making to avoid duplication of activities.

Programme Element 1.1: "Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work"

9. Comment by Poland: We appreciate that CES pays remarkable attention to the coordination of multilateral statistical work in conducting global statistical surveys and joint data collection. These activities help to avoid duplication in data collection from member countries and finally to save financial resources. We are convinced that there is a need to continue and strengthen such activities.

Programme Element 1.2: "Managerial and policy issues of direct concern to presidents of National Statistical Offices"

10. Comment by Poland: We approve the activities presented in programme element 1.2 and have no remarks. We can return to the topic of possible revision of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics after the discussion on the Confidentiality and Microdata project.

Programme Element 2.1: "Management of information technology infrastructure"

11. Comment by Portugal: In view of the increased level of insecurity of electronic transmissions, maximum priority should be given to put in place secure and operational methods and tools for the transmission of sensitive information.

12. The introduction of video and Internet conferencing facilities in international statistical cooperation will imply the adoption of some standards in order to allow intercommunication among the systems.

13. Common use solutions and tools should be included in the improved and publicised website on best application of statistical information and communication technologies.

Programme Element 2.3: "Dissemination and Interchange of Statistical Information"

14. Comment by Switzerland: With reference to the possible creation of a Task Force which would prepare a draft common metadata framework, on the basis of a proposal by the ECE secretariat, it should be noted that Eurostat has created a "Metadata Working Group" which has on its agenda coordination and consolidation of standardisation activities in the field of metadata and in the metadata production systems. The relation between the two initiatives should be clearly defined, and an effort should be made to better coordinate the various activities in this area.

15. Comments by the Czech Republic: In the framework of the activities mentioned in the Statistical Programme in the area of metadata, we recommend to deal with the following topics:

- Principles of metadata management
- Governance and corporate management issues
- Processes for metadata collection
- Terminology
- Common/generic models for statistical metadata
- Types/level of metadata
- Different uses of metadata
- Metadata and data interchange
- Macrodata framework - e.g. investigate the extension of SDDS or SDMX models to other domains
- Migration strategies from fragmented environments
- Usability concerns related to metadata management

16. In the area of dissemination, we recommend to include the topic "unified approach to data protection" (it regards the application of the same methods for user groups defined in the same way).

17. To ensure that duplication of activities does not take place.

Programme Element 2.5: "Statistical research and development"

18. Comments by Poland: We are interested in the activities for improving the quality of statistical information. We are interested in the following areas: seasonal adjustments, calculation and allocation of FISIM, public debt and deficit. We support activities on:

- seasonal adjustment: discussion on the possibility of establishing common methodology and programmes to be used by countries, OECD, Eurostat; responsibility of countries (who prepares seasonally adjusted series), interpretation of raw data and data seasonally adjusted.

- globalisation and enterprise groups: evaluation of the situation of independent enterprises and those belonging to groups (using the same measures does not provide users with a proper picture of the situation), establishment of UBO for FATS statistics by countries vs. the Eurostat idea of the creation of a common European register of enterprise groups.

19. We think that activities undertaken by OECD concerning the preparation of the Handbook on Economic Globalisation Indicators and a CD-ROM edition of the Glossary of

Statistical Terms are needed and useful. These kinds of activities not only improve the knowledge of the statisticians but also of the users of the data. Moreover, these kind of publications affect quality and comparability of statistical data production.

Programme Element 2.6: "Geographical and regional data"

20. Comment by Latvia: We have information that the Eurostat meeting on regional accounts and indicators (24-25/05) and the seminar in October on regional statistics as part of the preparation of future guidelines on cohesion policy have been postponed.

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The IP database has been updated to reflect the comment.

Programme Element 2.8: "Sustainable development"

21. Comment by Poland: We support the activities of international organizations on building sets of sustainable development indicators. In our opinion, stronger support by scientific institutions is needed. We support the proposal concerning the selection of "Measurement of sustainable development" as a topic for the discussion at the 2005 plenary session of the CES.

Programme Element 3.1: "Implementation of the system of national accounts"

22. Comment by Australia: Productivity/Capital Services: There is a need to be clearer on the methods used by OECD for comparing productivity estimates across 15 countries. The estimates are different to those published by the ABS and the reasons for this were not clear to us.

Programme Element 3.4: "Transport Statistics"

23. Comments by Canada: The objective shown under Activities of the OECD--Annual Transport Statistics "To have within one publication all main transport variables, compiled in a harmonised way, in order to allow comparisons between historical series" is one that Canada has shared with the United States and Mexico. Rather than the proposed OECD approach of the use of a Common Questionnaire, we attempted to reconcile the concepts and explain the conceptual differences where this was not possible, and publish the data in one publication.

24. In 2000, Statistics Canada, in partnership with statistical agencies and policy departments in the United States, Mexico and Canada completed a new report, North American Transportation in Figures. The report was completed under the framework of the North American Transportation Statistics Interchange, which serves as a forum for enhancement of transportation related statistics. The report provided a comprehensive set of statistical indicators of the use, performance and impact of transportation in North America. It included over 90 different data tables, supported by figures, maps and extensive technical documentation

describing data categories and definitions relating to each country. The report covered a wide variety of transportation subjects across the three countries: including transportation and the economy; safety; merchandise trade; freight activity; passenger travel; infrastructure; and energy and environment. The report is available at no cost on the Internet at

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/50-501-XIE/free.htm>

http://www.statcan.ca/francais/freepub/50-501-XIF/free_f.htm

Statistics Canada was one of a number of partner agencies assisting in the development of the report which was coordinated by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Other partner agencies included Transport Canada from Canada, the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, the Instituto Mexicano del Transporte, and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (INEGI) from Mexico, and the United States Census Bureau.

25. In 2004, the three countries will continue this important work of harmonization and integration of transportation and related statistics by creating a database on the Internet where the data series in the publication will be updated independently by each country as more current data become available.

26. Comment by Latvia: CCST and the meeting on maritime transport have been postponed.

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The IP database has been updated to reflect the comment.

Programme Element 3.7: "Tourism statistics"

27. Comment by Australia: There is overlap between the activities of WTO and OECD in this field. A better recognition of the need for greater collaboration between these two agencies in the Integrated Presentation is needed.

Programme Element 3.9: "Price statistics, including purchasing power parities"

28. Comment by Poland: In our opinion, ensuring internationally comparable and reliable measures of price changes and purchasing power parities is very important. We support the intention to draw special attention of the Conference to the issue of the measurement of prices and volumes in the service sector. We also support the OECD and Ottawa Group initiative to produce the methodological guide on PPI. It would facilitate the harmonization and data comparability of surveys.

29. Comments by France: With reference to the item "To define standards for the collection, compilation and dissemination of timely, reliable and internationally comparable measures of change..." in section "Issues and problems": As regards PPPs, the criteria for data collection may vary amongst countries, in spite of the instructions given by Eurostat. Comparability may be affected. As for France, a sample design is formed for each semestrial survey and the structure of distribution channels corresponding to the consumption of French households is taken into account. The average price of an item thus calculated, taking into account the weighting of distribution channels, is reliable.

30. With reference to the item "PPP work could benefit significantly from the participation of national accountants" in section "Attention of the Conference...": The French national accountants have been taking part in the daily work on PPPs since September 2002. This situation, almost unique in Europe, is a major asset for the improvement of coherence between PPP data and NA data.

Programme Element 3.14: " Business registers and administrative records in support of economic statistics"

31. Comment by Canada: With reference to the activity of the ECE on "Measuring globalisation – The multinational enterprises (MNEs) project", the text reads: "Four National Statistical Offices (Canada, France, Spain and United Kingdom) will participate in an initial phase of the project." The statement is incorrect - Spain is not a participant in the first phase of the MNE project, but Italy and Netherlands are, and they do not appear in the list of countries.

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The text in the IP has been corrected to reflect the comment.

Programme Activity 4: " Social and Demographic Statistics"

32. Comment by Australia: There is little in the way of international standards and definitions compared with economic statistics. The UN Statistical Commission also ignored most of the proposals put forward by an Expert Group meeting convened by UNSD in April 2003. This is despite the fact that internationally comparable data is being increasingly used by policy makers in countries to develop and monitor social policy.

Programme Element 4.1: "Demographic Statistics"

33. Comment by Australia: We would like to see specific focus on an appropriate working definition of "resident" for the purpose of compiling international migration and population statistics. With the increase in cross-border flows, the current definition may no longer be appropriate. We see this as being the most important aspect of the "Review of the UN recommendations on international migration statistics".

34. Comment by Latvia: In the section "Issues and Problems", we propose to replace the statement "Poor quality migration estimates" with "Quality of migration statistics needs improvement".

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The text in the IP database has been modified to reflect the comment.

35. The Eurostat meeting on migration statistics was already held on 26 February 2004. Theme 31. Population, Objectives 2004: we propose to add to the text the phrase "Distribute these tools to all NSIs".

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The text on "Theme 31 – Population" was taken

from the Eurostat's work programme, and therefore it cannot be modified.

36. Comment by Portugal: The information on migration flows is a constraint to achieve the objectives expressed in the document. There is no harmonisation of the migration definition and Portugal does not have administrative registers on population or exit flows. Inefficiencies in data collection lead to a constraint affecting the quality of the annual migration statistics and consequently the estimates on resident population. The situation worsens whenever monthly and regional data are requested.

Programme Element 4.4: "Labour statistics"

37. Comment by Australia: Development of internationally comparable methods for measuring labour under-utilisation (or underemployment) is not being given sufficient priority.

Programme Element 4.5: "Education and training statistics"

38. Comment by Australia: Shouldn't the activities of UNESCO be listed? The same comment could be made in respect of culture statistics.

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: Draft text on the activities of UNESCO has been included in the IP database following the comment.

39. Comment by the Czech Republic: We recommend to deal with better specification of definitions in the area of education. It applies, for example, to the boundary between "formal education" and "non-formal education", expenses for education and for some other areas, etc.

Programme Element 4.8: "Crime and criminal justice statistics"

40. Comments by Canada: Activities of UNODC: Reference to IVAWS being conducted in "some 10-15 countries around the world". It appears that the total will be closer to 10 countries and will exclude the United States and Canada.

Programme Element 4.9: "Health statistics"

41. Comments by Australia: The WHO entry is not up-to-date in light of agreements made at the last UN Statistical Commission meeting.

NOTE BY THE ECE SECRETARIAT: The contribution from WHO has not yet been received (the text available in the IP database relates to WHO-Euro). As soon as updated text is received, it will be included in the IP database.

Programme Element 4.11.3: "Registers and administrative records for social and demographic statistics"

42. Comment by Armenia: In Armenia, as in other CIS countries involved in the transition process, not many administrative registers have been established yet, in particular at the community level. In this respect, the importance attributed by statisticians to the establishment of administrative registers at the community level should be stressed.

Programme Element 5.1: "Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental databases"

43. Comment by Australia: The work of the International Panel on Climate Change in estimating the extent of future global warming because of greenhouse gas effects is possibly the most important international environment policy issue. Statistics are used extensively in their work. In a sense, it is surprising that this work does not feature in the Integrated Presentation but that mostly because the IPCC does not seem to want to engage with statisticians.

44. Comment by Poland: We agree that the main effort foreseen for further years should be concentrated first of all on development of methodologies, harmonizing the concepts and identifying common sets of indicators in the scope of emissions to air, waste generation and movements, in particular hazardous waste, bio-diversity and chemicals and health issues, environmental expenditures.

Programme Element 5.2: "Environmental accounting"

Comment by Poland: We agree that further deliberations and discussions are necessary on acceptance of consensus on the new "gross green national product". We support further work on integrating environmental and economic information in physical and monetary (when possible) terms using consistent concepts, definitions and classifications. Integrating environmental accounts with existing environmental data collection and indicators activities would be desirable. Therefore, we support all activities on elaboration and implementation of the new simplified handbook "Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting. An Operational Manual" describing SEEA.

Programme Element 6.1: "Dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection"

45. Comment by Poland: We support the idea to extend the number and scope of free databases on Internet.

46. Comments by Portugal: The pricing policies used by the statistical agencies in the dissemination of statistical information are changing. Eurostat is the most significant example once it is changing from charging all products and services into a free dissemination of information through the Internet. Other bodies are following this policy and today it is consensual that this chain will prevail in the coming years. The tendency is to disseminate on-line information of general interest that results from current statistical activity. Only services associated to specific needs and implying additional resources will be charged.

47. It is also relevant to note the increasing importance of the Internet as an alternative way to collect data for statistical purposes. The exchange of experiences among different statistical offices and organisms can constitute a significant contribution in this context. The National Statistical Institute of Portugal established a task force responsible for finding a solution using electronic means - mainly Internet - as a way to reduce the costs associated with collection processes and simultaneously to reduce the burden on the respondents.

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