

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty-fifth plenary session
Geneva, 11-13 June 2007

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The plenary session will start at 9:30 on Monday, 11 June and will finish on Wednesday 13 June at 12:30. It will be held in Salle XVIII, Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Documents for the meeting may be downloaded from the following Website:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.06.ces.htm>

INTRODUCTION

1. The 2007 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) will continue to follow the format introduced in 2002 by the 50th CES. The plenary session includes a formal session and two seminars. The formal session will deal with the review of general issues such as the international statistical work in the region, while the two seminars will focus on foundational issues of statistical systems and on new emerging issues.

2. An annotated provisional agenda and a tentative timetable for the 2007 plenary session are presented below. All the documents for the meeting will be posted on the UNECE Statistical Division's web site as they become available. **Delegates are kindly asked to bring their own copies of documents with them, as no paper copies will be made available in the meeting room.**

Provisional agenda and timetable

Time	Item	Topic	Document
Monday, 11 June (9:30-12:30 and 14:30-17:30)			
9:30-9:45	1	OPENING ADDRESSES and ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	
9:45-9:55	2	MEETINGS OF THE PARENT BODIES OF THE CES - 60 th session of the UNECE (April 2007) - 38 th session of the UN Statistical Commission (March 2007)	
9:55-10:00	9	Announcement on the election of the Bureau	
10:00-17:30		<i>FIRST SEMINAR SESSION: ON FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES OF STATISTICAL SYSTEMS</i>	
	5	Seminar on “INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF STATISTICAL OFFICES”	
10:00-10:05		Introductory comments by the Chairman: Aija Zigure (Latvia)	
10:05-11:05		Session I: Effectiveness of statistical programmes Session Organizer/Chair: Walter Radermacher (Germany) Discussant: Jan Plovsing (Denmark)	
		Invited papers: (Canada)	
		(Germany)	
		(Eurostat)	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
11:05-11:25		<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
11:25-12:30		Session I – continued	
12:30-14:30		<i>Lunch break</i>	
14:30 – 16:00		Session II: Efficiency of statistical offices Session Organizer/Chair: Yoel Finkel (Israel) Discussant: Donal Garvey (Ireland)	
		Invited papers: (Finland)	
		(Iceland)	
		(Israel)	
		(the Netherlands)	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
16:00-16:20		<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
16:20 – 17:20		Session II - continued	
17:20 – 17:30		Concluding remarks by the Chairman of the Seminar	

Time	Item	Topic	Document
Tuesday, 12 June (9:30-12:30 and 14:30-17:30)			
9:30-17:30		SECOND SEMINAR SESSION: ON EMERGING ISSUES	
	6	Seminar on “MEASURING CAPITAL – BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL MEASURES”	
9:30 – 9:35		Introductory comments by the Chairman: Geert Bruinooge (the Netherlands)	
9:35 – 10:00		Keynote speech by Prof. Dr. Bart van Ark, University of Groningen	
10:00 – 11:05		Session I: Policy drivers Session Organizer/Chair: Steve Landefeld (BEA, United States)	
		Presentation by Prof. Dr. William Nordhaus, Yale University, USA	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
11:05-11:25		<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
11:25 – 12:30		Session II: Capital boundaries in the revision of the System of National Accounts 1993 Session Organizer/Chair: Rob Edwards (IMF) Discussant: Walter Radermacher (Destatis, Germany)	
		Invited papers: (Australia)	
		(the Netherlands)	
		(Switzerland)	
		(Eurostat)	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
12:30-14:30		<i>Lunch break</i>	
14:30 – 15:45		Session III: Measurement of human capital Session Organizer/Chair: Brian Pink (Australian Bureau of Statistics) Discussant: Oystein Olsen (Statistics Norway)	
		Invited papers: (Australia)	
		(Italy)	
		(BEA, United States)	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
15:45-16:05		<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
16:05 – 17:20		Session IV: Measurement of social capital Session Organizer/Chair: Karen Dunnell (ONS, United Kingdom) Discussant: Michel Glaude (Eurostat)	
		Invited papers: (Finland)	
		(OECD)	
		Supporting papers: <i>to be announced</i>	
		General discussion	
17:20 – 17:30		Concluding remarks by the Chairman of the Seminar	

Time	Item	Topic	Document
Wednesday, 13 June (9:30-12:30)			
9:30-12:30		<i>FORMAL BUSINESS</i>	
9:30 – 9:40	3	COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNECE REGION Chairman's introductory comments	
9:40 – 10:00		(a) Review of population statistics	
10:00 – 10:15		(b) Coordination of health statistics	
10:15 – 10:40		(c) Developing an implementation strategy for the System of National Accounts Rev.1	
10:40-11:00		<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
11:00-11:30	4	PROGRESS REPORTS (a) measuring sustainable development (b) globalisation (c) follow-up to the CES seminar on human resources management in 2006 (d) confidentiality and privacy of statistical data integration (e) report on donor activities in technical cooperation in Central Asia (f) progress reports on the Teams of Specialists working under CES (g) UNECE Statistical Programme: report on 2006 and plans for 2007 (h) 2007 issue of the Database of International Statistical Activities (formerly called Integrated Presentation) (i) follow-up to decisions taken by the CES and its Bureau	
11:30 – 11:35	7	INFORMATION ON TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW BY THE CES BUREAU	
11:35 – 11:45	8	SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR SEMINARS TO TAKE PLACE DURING THE NEXT PLENARY SESSION	
11:45 – 11:55	9	ELECTION OF THE CES BUREAU	
11:55 – 12:00	10	OTHER BUSINESS	
12:00 – 12:30	11	ADOPTION OF THE REPORT	Draft report
12:30		CLOSING OF THE MEETING	

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE AGENDA

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

3. The proposed provisional agenda and timetable were agreed upon by the CES Bureau at its February 2007 meeting. The provisional agenda and timetable are presented for the approval of the Conference.

Item 2: Meetings of the parent bodies of the CES: the April 2007 session of the Economic Commission for Europe and the March 2007 session of the UN Statistical Commission

4. Information on the discussions held at the April 2007 session of the Economic Commission for Europe and on resolutions and decisions taken that have a bearing on the work of the Conference will be presented in ECE/CES/2007/1. There will be also an oral report on the outcome of the March 2007 session of the UN Statistical Commission.

Item 3: Coordination of international statistical work in the UNECE region

5. This agenda item is concerned with the coordination of international statistical work in the UNECE region and the decisions and recommendations that the Conference is expected to take on the respective issues.

(a) Review of population statistics

6. The Bureau reviewed the issues in population statistics at its February 2007 meeting based on papers by UNECE, UNSD and Eurostat. The papers are submitted to the Conference for comments and a short discussion.

(b) Coordination of health statistics

7. The Conference will be informed about the issues related to the coordination of health statistics, including the work of the UNECE Task Force on Health Status Measurement (the so-called Budapest initiative), the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics.

(c) Developing an implementation strategy for the System of National Accounts Rev.1

8. The System of National Accounts (SNA93) is currently being updated. As agreed at the last UN Statistical Commission meeting, the first volume of SNA93 Rev.1 will be presented to the Commission in 2008. It comprises a full set of chapters that represent the SNA framework in terms of conventions, accounts, and the integration of accounts, and incorporates the adopted recommendations on the 44 issues. The second volume comprising interpretations of the accounts and extensions, such as satellite accounts, will be finalised by 2009. The Conference will be informed of the implications of the SNA update and the implementation strategy.

Item 4. Progress reports

(a) Measuring sustainable development

9. The joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on statistics for sustainable development was set up in October 2005 to develop a broad conceptual framework for measuring sustainable development. The Conference will be informed about the progress of work.

(b) Globalisation

10. The 2006 CES plenary session decided that there is a need for a body to coordinate work on globalisation statistics. The Bureau supported establishing a Task Force on globalisation statistics to study how the NSOs can cope more effectively with the distortions to the traditional statistical measures that are occurring as a result of globalisation. The Conference will be informed about the planned work and the Terms of Reference of the Task Force.

(c) Follow-up to the CES seminar on human resources management in 2006

11. As a follow-up to the seminar on Human Resources and Training in June 2006, the Conference concluded that there is a need to continue the exchange of experience in this area. An Organising Committee (co-chaired by the Czech Republic and Canada) will prepare a forum to exchange views and know-how on human resources management, to take place in 2008. The Conference will be informed about the preparation of the forum.

(d) Confidentiality and privacy aspects of statistical data integration

12. In June 2006, the CES decided to set up a Task Force to examine the confidentiality and privacy concerns related to integrated data sets and consider the development of common principles. The Conference will be informed about the planned work of the Task Force, chaired by Brian Pink (Australia).

(e) Report on donor activities in technical cooperation in Central Asia

13. In June 2006, the Conference approved the strategy for coordination of technical cooperation in the UNECE region. Following the decision, the UNECE carried out a survey of donor activities in statistics in Central Asia. The results of the survey will be presented to the Conference for information.

(f) Progress reports on other Teams of Specialists working under the CES

14. The progress reports of other Teams of Specialists (Steering Groups, Task Forces) working under the auspices of the Conference, and the reports from experts' meetings held since June 2006, will be presented for information.

(g) UNECE Statistical Programme: report on 2006 and plans for 2007

15. A short report on the work undertaken by the UNECE Statistical Division in 2006, and plans and challenges for 2007 will be presented for information.

(h) 2007 issue of the Database of International Statistical Activities (formerly called Integrated Presentation)

16. The Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA) provides information on current statistical activities of all major international organizations active in the UNECE region. UNECE has been compiling this information at the request of the Bureau for a number of years. Since 2002, the information is available on the Internet in a database format at the UNECE web site (<http://unece.unog.ch/IntPres/default.asp>). The UNECE secretariat will provide brief information on the 2007 version of the database.

(i) Follow-up to decisions taken by the CES and its Bureau

17. A note that follows up on the decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference as reflected in the respective reports is updated for each Bureau meeting and for the CES plenary session. Its aim is to identify possible delays and facilitate taking decisions for further action.

Item 5: Seminar on increasing the efficiency and productivity of statistical offices

18. The Seminar is organised by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. It will be chaired by Aija Zigure (President of the CSB, Latvia).

Session 1: Effectiveness of statistical programmes

Session organiser: Walter Radermacher, Germany

Discussant: Jan Plovsing, Denmark

Invited papers: Canada, Germany, Eurostat

19. Effectiveness is the attainment of a predetermined goal. The effectiveness of the statistical programme should characterise the degree to which data users are supplied with high quality statistical information. Effectiveness of the statistical programme, like that of any government budget programme, is closely connected with the outcome (political results). The outcome of using statistical data can vary depending on the statistical domain and the type of data.

20. The session will try to determine how to formulate and measure the outcome obtained as the result of using specific statistical information. In most cases, it is extremely difficult to express the outcome in quantitative terms but it may be possible in qualitative terms. During this session, it would be interesting to get an answer to the question “What is the benefit from the use of higher quality statistical information?” and bring some examples of outcome (benefit) obtained.

21. The term “effectiveness” in government agencies is also used in a narrow sense when measuring outputs, for example, in the evaluation of the performance of the statistical office. The benchmarks of indicators of effectiveness of the statistical programme may include planned indicators, indicators of the previous period(s), indicators of other programmes or government agencies, or indicators of other countries and international organizations.

22. The discussion on effectiveness will focus on ways of improving the statistical offices’ responsiveness to the emerging demands of key clients and to data providers. Effectiveness may also be related to the responsiveness of users and the general public to disseminated information and to the work of the statistical office in general. Furthermore, it would be useful to link effectiveness to the assessment of the European Statistical System (implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice). The discussion of effectiveness could be extended to sustainability issues, such as investment in infrastructure and institutional memory.

23. The results of user satisfaction surveys may be considered as indirect indicators closely connected with the effectiveness of the statistical programme. Examples of results of some user satisfaction survey(s) would be welcome in the session.

Session 2: Efficiency of statistical offices

Session organiser: Shlomo Yitzhaki, Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel

Discussant: Donal Garvey, Ireland

Invited papers: Finland, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands

24. The efficiency may be determined as the relationship between outputs (results) and inputs (resources) used. The lower the costs used to obtain statistical information, the greater the efficiency. Discussion about the efficiency of the statistical office is closely connected with measuring the productivity and outputs of the statistical office.

25. When considering the efficiency, not only costs of the statistical office should be taken into account but also those of the respondents (the reporting burden). In any case, the question is linked with identifying the most preferable output indicators of the statistical office.

26. In the area of efficiency, the discussion will focus on the following topics:

- organizational dimension of generating efficiency, such as centralisation versus decentralisation;
- methodological approach to efficiency – e.g. active management of non-response; response burden and the users of statistical data; how to improve the value for the tax payers; auditing of processes, quality assurance and quality control methods;
- process approach to efficiency – including alternatives to traditional data collection as sources for efficiency, e.g. using administrative data in the production of official statistics, use of new, more efficient information technologies, data warehousing, electronic data reporting, etc.; how do the statistical offices manage the process.

27. Examples of approaches that allow reducing costs together with an estimation of the related savings would be welcome.

Item 6: Seminar on measurement of capital – beyond the traditional measures

28. The seminar is organised by Statistics Netherlands. It will be chaired by Geert Bruinooge (Director of Macro-economic Statistics and Dissemination, Statistics Netherlands).

29. The traditional conception of capital as the tangible means of production, such as machinery, transport equipment and buildings, has become obsolete. The (share) values of companies are increasingly determined by their innovative capacities. These are mainly driven by intangible forms of capital, such as human knowledge, scientific research, information technology, and brand building.

30. For statisticians, this poses the question of how these supplementary forms of capital can be captured by official statistics. One may argue that the national accounts balance sheets in their current form only provide a partial picture of an economy's net worth, due to these new forms of capital. A fundamental question in this context is to what extent can the new forms of capital be quantified in monetary values. Or are there other ways in which these capital stocks and the changes therein can be measured in a meaningful way?

31. A keynote speech will be delivered by Prof. Dr. Bart van Ark, University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

Session 1: Policy Drivers

Session Organiser: Steve Landefeld, Bureau of Economic Analysis, USA

Speaker: Prof. William Nordhaus, Yale University, USA

32. The 2000 Lisbon initiative shows that economic progress is generally acknowledged as being broader than economic performance alone. A key research question is how the above-mentioned supplementary capital components can be quantified in terms of statistics, and, secondly, how these statistics can feed policy debates. The Lisbon Strategy has led to a wide scale indicator monitoring system that is rather inconclusive in this respect. Monitoring systems should be improved to visualise, for example, possible trade-offs between different capital forms (e.g. environmental capital versus economic capital). Is a notion of capital helpful in bringing these different policy dimensions together?

33. The speaker on this topic will be Professor William Nordhaus of Yale University. Professor Nordhaus is, along with Professor Tobin, the father of expanded GDP accounts that include environmental and social effects. He was a member of President Carter's Council of Economic Advisers and is one of the preeminent U.S. economists on environmental measurement and policy, particularly in the area of global warming.

Session 2: Capital boundaries in the revision of the System of National Accounts 1993

Session organizer: Rob Edwards, IMF

Discussant: Walter Radermacher, Germany

Invited papers: Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Eurostat

34. The measurement of intangible capital is still in its infancy. Several authors stress the inherent measurement difficulties that go beyond those of tangible capital. National accounting practitioners face severe problems with capital estimates for computer software. According to the new SNA guidelines, the next hurdle will be compiling Research and Development (R&D) capital stocks. However, there are still many unresolved research questions in the area of R&D capital measurement. For example, is R&D capitalisation meaningful when satisfying output-related volume measures cannot be found? Secondly, substantial shares of R&D are performed in the public domain. This R&D is not subject to ownership in the SNA sense. Yet, parts of this R&D may play a fundamental role in the knowledge-based economy and lead to high spill-overs. Should this R&D be acknowledged as capital when ownership cannot be identified? Finally, how significant is R&D compared to non-scientific drivers of process and product innovations (business redesign, new marketing concepts)?

Session 3: Measurement of human capital*Session organizer: Brian Pink, Australia**Discussant: Oystein Olsen, Statistics Norway**Invited Papers: Australia, Italy, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis*

35. Knowledge embodied in persons may have a market value and this value is usually referred to as human capital. Human capital is currently not an asset defined in the SNA. Human capital is inseparable from individuals, and for that reason human capital cannot be regarded as a freely exchangeable entity. Yet education is generally acknowledged as a key source of economic growth. This is why most economists will consider education as investment in human capital which reinforces the knowledge endowments of the labour force over longer periods of time.

36. The introduction of human capital in the SNA has a far-reaching consequence. If the learning process leads to capital formation, it seems almost unavoidable to also accumulate in this capital formation the opportunity costs of time spent on education of those receiving education or training. In other words, the described implications of recording education expenditure as gross fixed capital formation will rigorously change the SNA. Which options are available to work out the concept of human capital in (satellite) accounts?

Session 4: Measurement of social capital*Session organizer: Karen Dunnell, ONS, United Kingdom**Discussant: Michel Glaude, Eurostat**Invited papers: Finland, OECD*

37. Social capital is a concept used in business, political science and sociology. It generally refers to how some people may gain more success in a particular setting through their superior connections to other people. Social capital has been used in the context of different kinds of issues, such as addressing the importance of social networks to social exclusion. How can social capital be observed statistically? In the social sciences, social networks are often measured by means of questionnaires. Can such questionnaires be used for the measurement of social capital in a national accounting context? Is it possible to measure the productivity gains of social capital using such questionnaires? Apart from measurement problems, questions can be asked about the nature of social capital. As is the case with human capital, it is inseparable from individuals and therefore not a freely exchangeable entity. In fact, when social capital refers to some measure of social support of individuals, could it not be conceived as part of human capital?

Item 7: Information on topics for in-depth review by the CES Bureau

38. The Bureau has regularly reviewed selected statistical areas in-depth at its February meetings. Then, one or two of the topics have been chosen for an in-depth review by the Conference. At its last meeting, the Bureau changed the procedure of how the in-depth reviews are carried out and the way the topics are selected. Furthermore, the Bureau decided to focus the in-depth review on strategic issues in the next 5 years rather than on the current issues and problems. The Conference will be informed about the new procedure and the topics that will be reviewed by the Bureau in October 2007 and February 2008.

Item 8: Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the next plenary session

39. A list of possible topics for seminars to take place during the 2008 plenary session will be distributed by the UNECE secretariat in advance of the plenary session to consult the CES member countries and international organizations. The Bureau will submit a proposal, taking into account the survey results, for discussion and approval by the Conference.

Item 9: Election of the Bureau

40. The current term of all members of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians expires at the closing of the 2007 plenary session, on 13 June 2007. At the 2007 plenary session, therefore, elections for a Chair and for Vice-Chairs will be held for the two-year period June 2007 to June 2009.

Item 10: Other business

41. Any additional issues that the Conference needs to be informed of can be taken up under this agenda item.

Item 11: Adoption of the report

42. The Conference is expected to adopt the report of the 2007 plenary session before it adjourns. The report will be short and will be limited as far as possible to decisions taken by the Conference during the course of the plenary session. The final report of the plenary session will be produced within two weeks or so after the plenary session and will be made available on the UNECE Web site.

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