

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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**TRANSLATION OF THE INTEGRATED PRESENTATION INTO FRENCH
AND RUSSIAN**

Note by the ECE secretariat

The issue

1. The ECE secretariat is preparing the first draft of the Integrated Presentation (IP) of international statistical work in English for review by the Bureau at its February meeting. Following the review, the pre-plenary version in English will be finalised, loaded onto the ECE website around the end of March and submitted to the UN Conference Services for translation into French and Russian. Normally, the IP should be available for the Conference in June in the three official languages. After the Conference, around July-August, the revised post-plenary version is loaded onto the ECE website in English and resubmitted for translation into French and Russian. In January of the following year, the cycle is repeated and the new version is prepared in English for review by the Bureau. After recent streamlining, the IP represents a document of about 240-250 pages. It should be noted that in order to facilitate the work of the translators, a 'document compare' of the various versions is always made, so as to highlight the new text.

2. During the last 2-3 years, the Russian, and especially the French, versions of the IP, both pre-plenary and post-plenary versions, have been increasingly delayed each year. It can happen that some of the pre-plenary addenda are not translated until late autumn when already the final or post-plenary version is distributed in English. This can be best illustrated with some examples from 2002.

3. For the 2002 plenary session the situation with the pre-plenary versions was as follows:

- Only the Introduction to the IP, PA 1: Organisation and of Statistical Services and PA 2: Technical Infrastructure was translated into French and Russian in time for the Conference.
- Programme Activities PA 4: Social and demographic statistics, PA 5: Environment statistics and PA 6: Dissemination and support for secretariat activities were translated into Russian just before the Conference. The French versions were available later in the summer.
- PA 3: Economic statistics was available in Russian after the Conference. The French version was only finalised just before Christmas in 2002.

4. At the same time, the final, post-plenary version of the IP in English was already available on the ECE website as of 17 September 2002. A similar picture can be described for 2000 and 2001.

5. It should be noted that the translation of the post-plenary version would begin only after the pre-plenary version is ready, which leads to accumulated delays. The result is that for most Programme Activities, the translation into French and Russian of the final version of the IP from the previous year is done almost in parallel with the preparation of the new version for the current year.

What are the reasons for delaying the translations?

6. In recent years, the number of staff in the Translation Services, a separate UNOG unit outside the ECE, has been reduced. A strict page-limit of 16 pages for a secretariat paper has been introduced. Each addenda of the IP is counted as a separate secretariat document. For documents that exceed the established page-limit, a waiver must be requested each time. This also involves some discussion and negotiation with the respective service. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for ECE to obtain and justify these waivers.

7. Furthermore, the preparations for the Conference coincide each year with the preparations for the UN Conference on Human Rights, which is considered to have a higher priority. Despite the good will of the colleagues who work in the Conference Services and the understanding they show with regard to the importance of the Conference of European Statisticians, the translation of the IP is always delayed. One reason cited often is that the IP is a long document, about 250 pages, and each addendum, which is treated as a separate document, exceeds the page-limit. In fact only two Programme Activities, PA5: Environment statistics and PA6: Dissemination and support for secretariat activities, comprise fewer than the permitted maximum of 16 pages.

The proposal

8. The IP is a dynamic tool and is relevant only if it is up-to-date. The translation in December of a Programme Activity that was valid in March-April and is due for revision the following December-January does not make much sense. It should be noted that the submission of the IP for translation requires secretariat input each time, such as formatting, document compare, etc. It is, therefore, proposed that the Bureau reviews the translation of the IP into French and Russian and whether it is acceptable, from now on, to translate a subset of it.

9. One possibility is that only an abstract of each Programme Activity is translated, while the full version in English continues to be made available on the ECE website. This can include the front text for each Programme Element which defines: goal, issues and problems, strategic medium-term objectives; expected outcomes in the next two years; attention of the Conference

is drawn to; decisions taken by the Conference. Estimated roughly, if an abstract of that kind is prepared for translation, the number of pages will be reduced by three to about 70-80 pages.

10. The issue of translating the entire IP into French and Russian will come up again when the IP is converted into a database, which is expected to go on the web towards the end of 2003. In view of the current situation with the translation services, it would be very difficult to synchronise the three language versions of the IP within the database framework.

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