

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Second Meeting of the 2002/2003 Bureau
Geneva, 13-14 February 2003

**CHANGING THE WAY 'OUTPUTS' ARE MEASURED: FOLLOW-UP.
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2003 WORK PROGRAMME OF
THE STATISTICAL DIVISION**

Note by the ECE secretariat

New form for identifying the outputs

1. In October 2002, the Bureau discussed the issue of how the outputs of the ECE secretariat are measured on the basis of documents prepared by the ECE secretariat (CES/BUR.2003/9 and its addenda 1-2). It was proposed to distinguish between two types of outputs, namely: (i) outputs of the Conference and its Bureau; and (ii) outputs of the work undertaken in subject-matter areas, where the national statistical offices are represented at the expert level.
2. As a result of the discussion, the Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to revise the list of outputs in subject matter areas and report them back to the Bureau in February 2003.
3. Following the Bureau recommendations, the ECE secretariat formulated the following revised list of final outputs in subject-matter areas:
 - (ii) Outputs in subject-matter areas:
 - Standards and norms of official statistics: methodologies, classifications, recommendations and guidelines, best practices, manuals;
 - Surveys and inventories of countries' practices and data availability;
 - Data dissemination: statistical databases, publications and websites;
 - Statistical support for policy analyses work (data collection and processing);
 - Technical assistance.
4. As recommended by the Bureau in October 2002, the new form for identifying the outputs was used as a first attempt for the Rapporteur's reports that have been prepared for the February 2003 meeting of the Bureau.

Establishment of Steering Groups

5. In October 2002, the Bureau also decided that any joint meetings in future be prepared by a Steering Group or Task Force, and that the Steering Group should submit to the Bureau for its review a note/terms of reference to define the activities of the Group, its final output, the process for achieving the output and the time framework.

6. Following these recommendations, the ECE secretariat began establishing Steering Groups in those areas where it was deemed appropriate and where meetings were held. Information is provided in the following paragraphs on the actions taken in this regard in the various programme activities.

Programme Activity 2 - Technical infrastructure and other cross-cutting issues

7. **Management of Statistical Information Systems:** A Steering Group was created and a note was submitted to the Bureau in October 2002 describing the group's objectives, expected achievements, target audience and partnership (document CES/BUR.2003/9Add.2). The Steering Group prepared the programme for the forthcoming joint ECE-Eurostat-OECD Meeting on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS), 17-19 February 2003. It also discussed a possible action plan in response to the decisions of the Conference held in June 2002 related to the collection and processing of statistical data. A note on this subject has been prepared by the ECE secretariat for the February 2003 Bureau meeting (see doc. CES/BUR.2003/19/Add.1).

8. **Dissemination of Statistical Output to Information Media:** At the October 2002 Work Session, a Working Group on **Dissemination of Statistical Commentary** was set up. The work is carried out in the framework of the CES Programme of Work, under Programme Element 2.3 "Dissemination and interchange of statistical information". A Steering Group was formed to prepare the terms of reference for the Working Group. It consists of representatives from Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden and United Kingdom. The Terms of Reference on Dissemination of Statistical Commentary, formulated by the Steering Group, are presented in Annex 1 to this note.

Programme Activity 3 – Economic statistics

9. The following Steering Groups/Task Forces are in a process of being set up.

10. **Consumer Price Indices:** Regular Joint ECE/ILO expert meetings on CPI have been organised every two years. The meetings have been used for discussing methodological developments and exchange of experience. In addition, since 1997, the ECE secretariat has organised special session for transition economies back-to-back with the main meeting. Recent work, since 1999, includes the development of the revised version of the CPI manual, where the joint meetings were used to consult with country representatives. The work was carried out under the auspices of the ISWG on prices. The final text of the CPI Manual will be presented at

the forthcoming Joint ECE/ILO meeting to be held in December 2003 in Geneva. In the meantime, some discussions have taken place between the ECE secretariat, ILO and Eurostat about the possibility for establishing a Task Force to design the future work on CPI. A further meeting between the ECE secretariat and ILO is scheduled for 20 February.

11. **Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs):** Joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD Consultations on the European Comparison Programme (ECP) used to be organised in the past in Vienna to discuss the link between the Western economies and the Eastern countries within the International comparison of GDP in Europe. Since 2000, annual Joint Consultations have been held in Geneva. Despite the fact that global comparisons were postponed, the European comparison Programme continued existing, also because of its importance for the EU and the Candidate Countries. The purpose of these joint consultations is to talk about recent methodological developments, but most importantly to discuss and endorse the final results of the European comparison. Representatives of the World Bank also take part in these consultations.

12. The ECE secretariat has published the results of the 1996 round of comparisons and is preparing to do the same for the 2000 results. In both cases, the CIS countries are included. In order to carry out the work, a good inter-secretariat cooperation is established which function as a Steering body: Eurostat (responsible for the EU countries and Candidate Countries), OECD (responsible for the OECD comparison), CIS-STAT and Russian Goskomstat (responsible for the comparison of the CIS and Mongolia). The ECE secretariat has had the responsibility of arranging the Consultation, linking and publishing the final results for all countries in the three groups.

13. The forthcoming Joint Consultation, to be held 31 March –2 April 2003 in Geneva will review the 2000 results and will discuss methodological and organisational issues related to the forthcoming global comparison. The possibility for joint future work will be also discussed and report to the Bureau at its October 2003 meeting.

14. **System of National Accounts:** Joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD meetings on National Accounts have been held every two years. The work is also reported to the ISWG on National Accounts. Since 2000, these joint meetings are organised according to a new format and structure. The idea is that duplication is avoided and that the work is carried out by the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with Eurostat and OECD, is complementary to the work already undertaken by these two organisations. Some examples include: work on monitoring the implementation of the Handbook on Measurement of NOE through the ECE Inventory of national practices; the project for conducting a survey of best practices for estimating service lives of fixed assets (further to the OECD Manual on measurement of capital stock); survey of countries' practices in estimating prices of exports and imports.

15. The possibility for establishing a steering group to develop terms of reference for work in this area and to identify concrete outputs within a given timeframe will be reviewed and reported to the Bureau in October 2003.

16. **Agricultural Statistics:** Joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD/FAO meetings have been held every two years mainly for exchange of experience and discussion on recent methodological developments. The work is conducted under the auspices of the ISWG on Agriculture. Recently the following three Task Forces have been established: Agriculture and household income statistics; Rural statistics; Environmental economic accounts for agriculture. Terms of reference for these Task Forces are not yet available.

17. **Information Society:** ECE was approached by a few countries suggesting ECE to take the initiative of organising a Statistical Workshop of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The ECE secretariat organised, after consulting with Eurostat, OECD and ITU, an informal preparatory meeting that took place on 15 January 2003 to explore the interest in the organisation of a Statistical Workshop as a side event to the World Summit. The first meeting of the Steering Group should take place at the end of February 2003. Further details are given in Annex 2 to this note - document CES/WSIS/2003/1 "Proposal of Organizing a Statistical Workshop to the World Summit on the Information Society and Report of an Informal Preparatory Meeting for such an event".

Programme Activity 4 – Social and demographic statistics

18. **Registers and Administrative Records for Social and Demographic Statistics:** At the December 2002 Joint UNECE-EUROSTAT Work Session, a Steering Group was established to elaborate a concrete proposal for future work. The Steering Group is composed of representatives of Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, UNECE and Eurostat. The Group has not yet met, therefore there are no terms of reference.

19. **Migration statistics:** The ECE-Eurostat joint meeting to be held on 28-30 April 2003 is at an advanced stage of preparation. The meeting is being planned and organized by Eurostat and ECE jointly and in collaboration with UNSD. Participants will be informed of the Bureau's decision of having future joint work planned and organized by a Steering Group. Countries that express a willingness to serve on the Steering Committee will be identified. Moreover, the ECE secretariat will encourage the Steering Group to focus its attention on country case studies and related work by countries on assessing how and to what extent the "new" UN recommendations on international migration statistics can be used by countries to produce immigration and emigration statistics.

20. **Population and housing censuses:** The ECE-Eurostat joint meeting to be held on 21-23 May 2003 is at an advanced stage of preparation. Participants will be informed of the Bureau's decision of having future joint work organized by a Steering Group. However, a Steering Group of NSI representatives may not be established for the next joint meeting on population censuses, because for the next series of joint meetings on censuses - that will be held during the 2004-2007 period and that will be devoted to work aimed at drawing up a new set of recommendations for the 2010 round of censuses - the documentation will have to be prepared by the ECE secretariat and Eurostat.

21. **Demographic projections:** The last meeting planned for 2003 in the area of social and demographic statistics is the ECE-Eurostat joint work session on (15-18 October 2003). The meetings in this field are generally planned by a consortium of NSIs and other agencies that collaborate in planning and organizing the meetings at roughly 5 or 6 year intervals, and in underwriting their costs in organizing them. The 2003 meeting is being financially sponsored and planned by the Netherlands (NIDI and Statistics Netherlands), Austria as the host country (Statistics Austria and IIASA), Eurostat and possibly other donor countries and agencies. The ECE is not directly involved in planning and organizing it, however the organizers have wanted it to be associated with the meeting in order to provide greater scope for CIS countries and other countries that are not under the umbrella of the EU to participate in it.

22. **Labour statistics:** A joint ECE-Eurostat-ILO Seminar on Measurement of the Quality of Employment took place on May 2002, before the recommendation of the Bureau that future joint work be planned and organized by a Steering Group. Nevertheless, a Steering Group will be set up composed by representatives of interested countries, to discuss future work and will report to the Bureau in October 2003.

23. **Gender statistics:** The September 2002 Work Session proposed the following terms of reference for a next meeting:

- (i) Fostering links between statisticians and policy makers and other users of gender statistics;
- (ii) Organizing the production of gender statistics and coordination of work on gender statistics;
- (iii) Social networks from a gender perspective; and
- (iv) Violence from a gender perspective.

These terms of reference will be reviewed by a yet-to-be-established Steering Group. The Steering Group will also be requested to define the future activities in this field, as well as new terms of reference. Representatives of interested international organizations will also serve on the Steering Group. The Group is also expected to contribute towards launching and maintaining the ECE regional Gender Statistics Website for monitoring change (established with UNDP support).

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Dissemination of Statistical Commentary

Background

This is a proposal to set up an Working Group on Dissemination of Statistical Commentary under the CES Programme of Work PE 2.3 Dissemination and interchange of statistical information. The proposal is prepared by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden and United Kingdom.

The reason for launching international work in this area is that statistical agencies are shifting their focus from disseminating pure statistical data towards complementing the data with commentary and analysis – using words to explain the numbers. Such a shift is required to increase the visibility and role of statistics and to attract the attention of media and general public. Several statistical offices experiment in this direction but there is not much exchange of experience on international level and no forum where the dissemination experts could discuss the related problems. Furthermore, the dissemination of statistical analysis and commentary raises questions related to the independence and impartiality of statistics. It would therefore be desirable to discuss these issues internationally to agree upon some recommendations and/or guidelines in accordance with the fundamental principles of statistics.

The idea to launch international work in this area was primarily presented and developed by Statistics Canada and Statistics Norway. The initiative got immediate support from Statistics Sweden. The proposal was presented at the Work Session on Dissemination of Statistical Output to Information Media (28-30 October 2002, Geneva).

Purpose of the Group

The objective is to facilitate the dissemination of statistical commentary and analysis as tools to increase the visibility and use of statistics among wide groups of users.

The aims of the Group are:

- to collect, discuss and make available the practices in dissemination of statistical analysis and commentary in National Statistical Offices;
- to create a network of experts working in this area, to exchange experience among them;
- to develop guidelines and recommendations for preparation and dissemination of statistical analysis, commentary and storytelling.

Some questions that need to be addressed are as follows:

- How much can statistical offices comment on data? Where is the line between statistical commentary and political commentary, and how to ensure that the line is not crossed?
- What are the obstacles for disseminating statistical analysis, commentary and stories? Why is it not spread more widely (wish to keep a low profile, lack of capable staff, not enough knowledge and experience)?
- The question of human resources. Are statisticians and data analysts capable storytellers? How to train statisticians to see the stories behind the figures and to convey these to media and general public in an understandable way? How to build such a culture in the office?
- How to integrate statistics from different subject-matter areas to provide analysis that could attract the attention of users?
- How to write good statistical commentary and stories? What are the elements of such a text? How to relate it to people's everyday lives?

- How to select the topics for commenting and analysing? Are there topics that can be considered politically sensitive or even undesirable in certain circumstances? Should the public opinion be taken into account?
- What kind of analysis, commentary and stories do users need?
- What is the best use of the new technologies in order to disseminate commentary and not only data? What is the difference in preparing texts for the web and writing for the papers?

Final output:

- 1) a compendium of examples from different agencies in disseminating statistical commentary;
- 2) guidelines for national statistical offices and international organizations on disseminating statistical commentary (at a later stage, based on the examples).

Target audience:

The Steering Group suggests that the work programme would focus on the following groups of delegates in all ECE countries, regardless of how advanced they are in disseminating commentary and analysis:

- heads of dissemination departments,
- editorial staff presenting analysis and commentary,
- on some occasions: people doing layout and marketing.

Method of work:

The Steering Group proposes to organise a series of work sessions (2-3) with one to two year intervals. Each work session would last 2-3 days and focus on specific problems. The Steering Group suggests that the first work session could be convened at the end of 2003 or beginning of 2004. A preliminary agenda is provided below.

The Group can work by communicating via e-mail and teleconferences between the meetings.

The Group can build on work already done, e.g. by the group on the Dissemination of Statistical Output to Information Media. However, its focus is wider and it deals with problems that have not been considered (or have been very little touched) by the media dissemination group.

Proposed agenda for the first work session (2003/2004):

The duration of the meeting would be two days. The following topics are proposed to be discussed:

1. How to make a story out of statistics? Recruiting and training of storytellers, and the creation of a favourable culture. (*Main responsibility: Statistics Norway*);
2. How to decide which stories to tell and to ensure they are of high quality? (*Main responsibility: Statistics Canada*);
3. Dissemination of statistical commentary and stories, how to get them through to the user (general public and the media)? (*Main responsibility: Statistics Sweden*);
4. How to integrate statistics from different subject-matter areas to produce analysis that would be of interest to a wide audience? (*Main responsibility: United Kingdom Office for National Statistics*).

Annex 2

**CES/WSIS/2003/1
22 January 2003**

ENGLISH ONLY

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

(Geneva, 15-17 January 2003)

**Proposal of Organizing a Statistical Workshop
to the World Summit on the Information Society
and
Report of an Informal Preparatory Meeting for such an event**

Background

ECE was approached by a few countries suggesting ECE to take the initiative of organizing a Statistical Workshop of the World Summit on the Information Society. To this end ECE contacted OECD, Eurostat, ITU and a number of countries to further explore if there was an interest in jointly organizing this kind of side event. The reaction was generally positive and it was agreed that an informal preparatory meeting would take place in conjunction with the ITU meeting on ICT Indicators, Geneva, 15-17 January 2003. The informal meeting was announced at the above-mentioned ITU meeting and took place at the end of the session on 15 January. The result of the informal preparatory meeting was reported orally to the ITU meeting on 17 January.

Participation in the informal preparatory meeting

The informal preparatory meeting gathered some 30 participants from the following organizations and countries: UNECE, UNCTAD, UNESCO, World Bank, ITU, Eurostat, OECD, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Spain and Switzerland.

Conclusions of the informal preparatory meeting

- Organizations and countries expressed interest in organizing the proposed statistical side event to the WSIS although financial contributions are very unsure – contributions in kind were promised.
- It should be a low cost side event organized back-to-back with the main event and under the umbrella of WSIS.

- The present report should be presented to the secretariat of WSIS.
- A small steering group or task force should be set up in order to draw up the agenda and to prepare for the logistics for the side event. A steering group meeting in Geneva was tentatively for 26 February 2003.
- Strong leadership for the Workshop was emphasized. The elected officers for the Workshop should be high ranking persons in statistical and other governmental agencies, preferably Director Generals of National Statistical Offices.

Among the possible topics for the Statistical Workshop, which should have a developing country focus, the following were mentioned:

- Statistical capacity building;
- Measuring the digital divide;
- Review of existing methodologies of ICT statistics;
- Measurement and definition issues including quality issues, prioritisation in ICT measurements, meta data issues and ICT indicators in the framework of the UNECE Fundamental Principles;
- Household budget surveys and ICT.

It was also stressed that the right to information is one of the bases for the information society and that the Workshop should have this as an overall theme.

The topics for the Workshop will be further explored by the February steering group meeting.
