

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Third meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau
Geneva, 12-13 February 2008

Item 10a of the Provisional
Agenda

CES TASK FORCE ON PENDING ISSUES IN BUSINESS STATISTICS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Note prepared by Statistics Canada and Eurostat

BACKGROUND

1. In February 2007, the CES Bureau discussed a range of strategic issues in the field of business statistics. The Bureau observed that a number of international initiatives were already under way in this area, notably the UN Friends of the Chair initiative on the integrated approach to economic statistics, the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers (formerly known as the International Round Table on Business Survey Frames), and the European group on multinational enterprises.
2. There are numerous other international fora where various aspects of business statistics are being discussed. The following list is by no means all-inclusive:
 - subsequent to a CES seminar in June 2005, a Task Force on Electronic Data Reporting was established to further explore the issues surrounding EDR;
 - additional international work in the area of business statistics is presently being carried out by the UN Expert Group on Distributive Trade Statistics and the UN Expert Group on Industrial Statistics;
 - the OECD recently established a new Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics, merging the two existing Expert Groups on Merchandise Trade and on Trade in Services into one Working Party;
 - the OECD is currently developing frameworks for business indicators in the areas of globalization, entrepreneurship and science and technology;
 - the UN Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications and its Technical Subgroup is coordinating international implementation work related to the latest revisions of ISIC and the CPC;
 - the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Impact of Globalization on National Accounts is reviewing ways in which phenomena related to globalization (e.g. transfer pricing, merchanting) are impacting the source data, most notably business statistics, used in compiling national accounts;
 - the Ottawa Group on Price Statistics, the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, the Voorburg Group on Services Statistics, the London Group on Environmental Statistics and the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation Statistics are also doing valuable work on different aspects of business statistics.

3. Looking beyond the work of these various groups, the Bureau felt there were other important strategic issues in the field of business statistics that would benefit greatly from additional international cooperative effort. It saw a need for a wider vision of the directions in which business statistics are headed over the next several years. The Bureau decided “to include the issue of business statistics on the agenda of the CES plenary session in 2008. Meanwhile, a small task force should be formed to address pending issues in the field of business statistics.”

4. The Bureau asked Statistics Canada and Eurostat to prepare the terms of reference of the Task Force.

OBJECTIVE

5. The purpose of the Task Force is to identify and prepare an overview of a few key strategic issues in order to help define the focus of CES discussion in the area of business statistics over the next five years. The Task Force should examine in particular those areas where there is scope for sharing best practices and promoting international harmonization. The Task Force should organize and lead a one-day seminar on business statistics at the CES annual meeting in June 2009.

6. Overlaps should be avoided with the work done in other groups mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 that are currently working on business statistics. For example, technical issues related to electronic data reporting are to be kept outside the scope of the Task Force, as these are dealt with by the Task Force on Electronic Data Reporting.

7. The Task Force will begin its work by considering what definition of business statistics to adopt for its purposes. This could range from a narrow traditional definition encompassing structural business statistics, industrial and services statistics, and business registers to a wide definition encompassing all statistics collected from businesses including, for example, environmental statistics and information about intangible assets such as business knowledge. It will then identify the areas in business statistics that need further work and prepare a work plan. This work plan will address one or possibly two of the following areas:

- the conduct of economic censuses;
- the conduct of business surveys;
- the reduction of respondent burden;
- new domains/user needs;
- the definition and treatment of multinational enterprises;
- review of the various international manuals related to business statistics.

8. In sum, the first order of business for the Task Force will be to select specific directions within the broad field of business statistics to provide a focus for CES discussions during the next few years.

MEMBERSHIP

9. The Task Force will be a Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Task Force. It will be open to all member states of UNECE, OECD and Eurostat. IMF and UNCTAD will also participate in

the work of the group. Members are expected to actively contribute to the agenda of the Task Force.

10. The Task Force will be co-chaired by [to be determined]. UNECE will provide secretariat support to the Task Force.

11. A leadership sub-group composed of members from Eurostat, Statistics Canada, UNECE, OECD and 3 or 4 others [to be determined] will steer the work of the Task Force and will report on the progress of work to the Conference and its Bureau.

OUTCOME

12. The Task Force will provide a forum to encourage and coordinate the work undertaken by countries and international organizations in the area of business statistics. It will begin by preparing a work plan and will also organize a one-day CES seminar in June 2009.

TIMETABLE

13. The following timetable for the work of the Task Force is proposed:

February 2008: The CES Bureau approves the Task Force terms of reference, possibly with modifications. The CES Bureau also identifies the Task Force co-chairs.

March-April 2008: The Task Force co-chairs, working with the UNECE secretariat, identify the Task Force members and the leadership sub-group.

June 2008: The Task Force co-chairs submit a brief initial report to the CES plenary session formally launching the Task Force activities.

Summer or early fall 2008: The Task Force leadership sub-group meets either face-to-face or via tele-conference to discuss the Task Force agenda and priorities. The immediate goals are to prepare a work plan and define an agenda for a meeting of the full Task Force in early 2009. Co-chairs prepare a short report for submission to the CES Bureau fall 2008 meeting.

Early 2009: First meeting of the full Task Force. The meeting objective is to prepare a work plan and organize the agenda for a one-day seminar on issues in business statistics as part of the June 2009 CES annual meeting.

June 2009: The Task Force organizes a one-day seminar on issues in business statistics as part of the CES annual meeting.

Thereafter: The Task Force will pursue issues arising out of the June 2009 seminar.

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