

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

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

Item 10b of the Provisional
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE
ORGANISING COMMITTEE OF THE JOINT UNECE/EUROSTAT/OECD
SEMINAR ON BUSINESS REGISTERS**

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

BACKGROUND

1. The joint Business Registers Seminar in June 2007 recommended establishing an Organising Committee to guide the preparation of future joint seminars on business registers. The Organising Committee replaces the Steering Group on Business Registers, which was set up in 2003 and whose mandate expired at the end of 2006. Below are the proposed Terms of Reference for the work of the Organising Committee.
2. The joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Business Registers Seminars have been organised every two years. They have been well attended by national business register specialists from the UNECE region, including Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as from outside the region.
3. This forum is designed to facilitate exchange of information about current and intended practice among expert practitioners, in particular those from transition/developing countries and/or those in the process of developing statistical business registers. The growing need for international coordination in developing and maintaining national business registers in order to improve comparability of statistics and reduce existing gaps between western and eastern countries makes such a forum ever more important.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

4. The purpose of the Committee is to assist the UNECE, Eurostat and OECD in the preparation and follow-up of joint business registers meetings. The Committee decides the future agenda items and the time and frequency (if needed) of future meetings. The Committee may also propose experts that can contribute to the work on business registers.
5. The Committee should take into account activities undertaken in the Eurostat Working Group on Business Registers and Statistical Units (BR-SU WG) and the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers (previously the International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames) and other groups involved in business statistics. The Committee should aim to strengthen the coordination with activities in these groups and avoid possible overlap of work. It should be noted that the Eurostat WG has a very different mandate and the joint BR Seminar and the Wiesbaden Group complement each other's work with different focuses and partly different

participating countries. The work of these groups is described briefly in Annex 1. The Report of the last joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD meeting (2007) is attached in Annex 2.

WORK PLAN

6. A joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD meeting on business registers will be organised in 2009 in June or July, subject to further consultations with the Organising Committee and the availability of meeting facilities. The joint seminar will consider the following substantial topics:

- profiling practices and related issues (profiling of public sector units, special purpose entities, etc.);
- sources for identification of enterprise groups (other than profiling);
- the business register as a source for further development of business demography statistics;
- best practices for publication, dissemination and wider statistical use of business register data.

7. A preliminary schedule and plan of further meetings which will alternate with the meetings of the Wiesbaden Group (scheduled in 2008 and 2010) will be drawn up.

8. A one-day workshop for emerging ECE economies (Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus) will be organised, focusing on the practical problems associated with the implementation of the best business register practices. Depending on financing availability, the meeting will be organised as a separate workshop in 2008 or back-to-back with the joint BR Seminar in 2009.

9. The feasibility of using the UNECE web site for the comprehensive sharing of methodology on business registers will be reviewed.

MEMBERS OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

10. The Committee comprises four representatives of CES member countries, the incoming Chairperson of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers, and representatives from UNECE, Eurostat and OECD. Other experts can be invited if this is found useful.

MEETINGS OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

11. The Committee meets during the joint Business Registers Seminar. It is envisaged that, between sessions, the Committee will review issues by means of electronic discussions and whenever possible will meet for consultations in conjunction with other major meetings on business registers.

REVIEW OF THE MANDATE OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

12. After three years, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) will review the mandate of the Organising Committee.

ANNEX 1

THE JOINT UNECE/EUROSTAT/OECD SEMINAR

1. The joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Seminar takes place every two years and provides a forum for expert practitioners from countries in the UNECE region and beyond¹ that have a very heterogeneous experience in business statistics, and statistical business register systems in particular. Starting in 2009, the Seminar will alternate with the meetings of the Wiesbaden Group.
2. This forum is designed **to facilitate exchange of information about current and intended practice among the experts, in particular those from transition/developing countries and/or those in the process of developing statistical business registers.** It focuses on issues related to the practical maintenance and use of business registers in statistics in order to improve comparability of statistics and reduce existing gaps between western and eastern countries. In so doing, this forum helps to identify bottlenecks in the implementation of international standards and promotes best practices.

THE WIESBADEN GROUP ON BUSINESS REGISTERS

3. The Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers is a UN City Group. Its main purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of views and the conduct of joint experiments related to the development, maintenance and use of business registers to support survey sampling and other statistical activities related to the production of business statistics. The Wiesbaden Group is an informal body and participation is on a voluntary basis.² Annual meetings will be held once every two years starting in 2008, alternating with the joint Seminar.
4. The Wiesbaden Group is a platform where problems, developments, projects, ideas and concepts concerning the construction, maintenance and improvements of business registers are presented and discussed. In this way, the group brings together experts and responsible persons on business registers who could use the experiences of others to promote and develop their national business register. **The Wiesbaden Group in particular tackles forward looking aspects and aims to identify new challenges concerning business registers.**³

THE EUROSTAT WORKING GROUP ON BUSINESS REGISTERS AND STATISTICAL UNITS

5. The mandate of the Eurostat Working Group on Business Registers and Statistical Units (BR-SU WG) is to draw up proposals on the implementation of business registers, regarding

¹ The last Seminar (18-19 June 2007, Geneva) was attended by 65 experts. One third of them were from the CIS and South-east Europe. Experts from Brazil and Mexico also attended. For more details see the Report on the Seminar in Annex 2.

² Among the participants of the last Round table meeting (October 2007, Wiesbaden) there was only one expert from the CIS region (Tajikistan).

³ For example, several years ago experts at this forum initiated a feasibility study on establishing a cross-country register of multinational enterprise groups, the predecessor of the EuroGroups register currently coming into operation. In the future, the Wiesbaden Group is going to start a series of country-based projects to investigate the benefits of complex enterprise profiling.

topics like coverage, characteristics, access, etc. It submits, if needed, proposals to the Statistical Programme Committee for amending the regulations. It also has to prepare documents on the detailed rules, the definitions and the methods of adaptation to the economic development and technique of the various statistical units.

6. The annual (or semi-annual, if needed) meetings of the Eurostat BR-SU WG are the main vehicle for effective harmonisation of national business registers across the European Union, for monitoring quality of the registers and their conformity to the EU regulations. **The consultations and discussions in this working group provide a basis for further BR development through the adaptation of the existing EU legal framework to new demands in statistics:** introduction of new legal acts, changes to the existing regulations and recommendations manual that provide the guidance for their implementation, and reviews on best practices.

7. The BR-SU WG has subgroups, the most important of which is the 'Steering group on the EuroGroups register', the objective of which is to advise and support the implementation of the Community register on multinational enterprise groups and their constituent units. This register will consist of an integrated system between a central register in Eurostat and national registers in Member States.

ANNEX 2

UNITED
NATIONS

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**Economic and Social
Council**

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of Experts on Business Registers

Tenth meeting
Geneva, 18-19 June 2007

Report of the Group of Experts

The meeting was organised jointly with the Commission of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Group of Experts on Business Registers meeting was held in Geneva from 18-19 June 2007. It was attended by Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. The meeting was attended by representatives of the European Commission (Eurostat), United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Central Bank (ECB), International Labour Office (ILO), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS-STAT) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division also attended.

2. The provisional agenda was adopted.
3. Mr. Michel Euriat (France) was elected Chairman. Ms Inger Öhman (Eurostat), Mr. Nadim Ahmad (OECD) and Ms. Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich (UNECE) co-chaired the meeting.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

4. Information on activities and events was provided to the participants by :UNECE, Eurostat, OECD, representative of the International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames and United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD).
5. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting on the basis of invited papers and supporting papers:
 - (a) Globalization and business statistics: Experience in developing enterprise group data, including work on multinational enterprises (MNEs) and on profiling;
 - (b) Development of statistical outputs from business registers;
 - (c) Quality improvements in business registers and implications of revisions of NACE (Nomenclature générale des activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes) and International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC);
 - (d) The role of the business register in coordinating accounting and other administrative data for statistical users;
 - (e) Future work and Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Steering Group;
 - (f) Other business.

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AND THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE MEETING

6. Recommendations for future work are given below. Summary of the discussion and conclusions that the participants reached at the meeting on the above topics are presented (in English only) in the annex prepared after the meeting and distributed to participants. The documentation of the meeting are available on the UNECE website <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.06.busreg.htm>

IV. RECOMMENDED FUTURE WORK

7. The meeting recommended that a next Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting be organised in 2009. The possible venue can be Luxembourg or alternatively Paris. The meeting will be prepared by the organising committee consisting of the representatives of UNECE, Eurostat and OECD and experts from national statistical offices.⁴ The following substantive

⁴ Currently: Czech Republic, France and United Kingdom and the expert from the Interstate Statistical Committee of CIS. Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed an interest to participate in the Organising Committee (to be confirmed).

topics were considered of greatest interest for possible inclusion in the agenda of the next Seminar on business registers (BR):

- (a) Profiling practices and related issues (profiling of public sector units, special purpose entities, etc.);
- (b) Sources for identification of enterprise groups (before profiling);
- (c) Business Register as a source for further development of business demography statistics;
- (d) Best practices for publication, dissemination and wider statistical use of BR data.

8. The meeting recommended that the UNECE should continue to conduct its BR survey in alternate years, covering those UNECE and OECD countries not in the Eurostat annual inquiry. The UNECE should coordinate its timing fully with the Eurostat survey and should seek active feedback from countries on the consolidated results of the surveys. Starting in 2008, the questionnaire should include some specific questions related to business demography.

9. The results of the UNECE surveys on BR and their analysis should be made publicly available, for instance, by being posted on the UNECE web site.

10. The timing and agenda for the meeting in 2009 would be coordinated with the work programme of the Wiesbaden Group on business registers.

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