

**Regular Capacity Building Programme
UNECE Activity Report**

Seventh meeting of the SPECA Programme Working Group on Statistics

28-29 August 2012, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

The 7th SPECA Project Working Group on Statistics (PWGS) was organized jointly by UNECE Statistical Division and the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association (ESO). The meeting took place in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan from 28 to 29 August 2012. A side event was organized in Bishkek on 27 and on 30 August. The meeting was targeted at heads of SPECA national statistical offices/committees and was attended by representatives from the following SPECA member countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as experts from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), the World Bank (WB) and Statistics Norway.

On 27 August, participants were invited to visit the premises of the National Statistics Committee of Kyrgyzstan (NSC). Mr. Akylbek Osmonaliev, Chairman of the NSC, presented the legal, institutional and organizational framework of the Kyrgyz System of Official Statistics. The Chairman also presented the outcome of the Global Assessment of the National Statistical System that was conducted by experts from the UNECE, EFTA and Eurostat and shared with participants major recommendations provided in the Global Assessment's report for the further development of national statistical capacities.

On 30 August, on their way back from Issyk-Kul to Bishkek, participants were invited to visit the Institute of Data Sources and Methodology of the NSC. This newly established institute is the result of the integration of the former Training Centre and Research Institute following the recommendations of the Global Assessment report.

The objective of the 7th PWGS meeting was to discuss, in the context of the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA 2008), recent initiatives and approaches, share good practice in enhancing the coordination of national statistical systems and streamlining statistical production processes, with a major focus on the production of integrated economic statistics. The meeting allowed participants to share relevant information in the perspective of the High-level Seminar on Modernizing Statistical Production and Services that was going to take place in St. Petersburg on 3-5 October 2012. The meeting was organised in 3 substantive sessions and a last agenda item to discuss the new Terms of Reference of the SPECA PWGS.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Akylbek Osmonaliev, Chairman of the National Statistics Committee of Kyrgyzstan and Mr. Jantoro Satybaldiev, Head of President's Office of the Kyrgyz

Republic. Both stressed that reliable and internationally comparable statistics are a prerequisite for the monitoring of social and economic progress of the country. They expressed gratitude to the UNECE and EFTA for the organization of this event in Issyk-Kul. Mr. Gabriel Gamez, UNECE Regional Adviser in Statistics, and Mr. Kurt Wass, Deputy director of the ESO, thanked the hosting country and in particular the NSC for their valuable support in the organization of the event and hospitality. Mr. Gamez mentioned that without the generous support from ESO, it would not have been possible to organize the meeting in such an inspiring and stunning spot as Issyk-Kul.

The **first session**, chaired by Mr. Wass, was devoted to capacity building activities in the SPECA region, and allowed participants to discuss main achievements and remaining challenges in the development of official statistics in the region, to assess concrete outcome of existing strategic programmes and to discuss on-going and upcoming projects in support of statistical capacity building in the SPECA member countries. Mr. Gamez presented the main purpose of Global Assessments (GAs) of national statistical systems as a tool contributing to the planning and monitoring of capacity building programmes. Mr. Mustafa Dinč, World Bank senior economist and statistician, made a statement about national strategies for the development of official statistics (NSDS). He touched upon the subject of a new approach to statistical capacity improvement and World Bank programmes launched to support statistical capacity development of SPECA countries. Eurostat's and Statistics Norway's technical cooperation programmes and activities, experiences and prospects in the SPECA region were presented respectively by Ms. Mariana Kotzeva, Hors Classe Adviser at Eurostat, and Ms. Viebeke Ostreich Nielsen, Project Manager at Statistics Norway.

This session provided the opportunity to discuss among heads of national statistical offices of participating countries and representatives from multilateral and bilateral statistical bodies recent developments and future needs in statistical capacity building in the SPECA region. It was agreed that coordination of technical cooperation activities among international and bilateral donors was a prerequisite for streamlining the development of national statistical capacities. National statistical offices/committees in each country should on their side enhance the coordination of these activities at national level with other producers of official statistics. Participants also considered that ideally outcome and recommendations of global assessments should be further used as a major input in the design of NSDS and that the latter should be considered as the reference document for the planning, implementation and monitoring of future technical cooperation activities.

The **second session** aimed to explore recent developments and share good practices in modernizing and streamlining statistical processes as well as to improve the efficiency of statistical production. The session was chaired by Mr. Nurbolat Aidapkelov, Executive Secretary

of Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The session started with an introduction to the drivers for change, and an overview of the standards that can be used to facilitate change. Mr. Steven Vale, Head of Statistical Information and Methodology Unit at UNECE, discussed standard-based modernization of official statistic, introducing the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and the work on the Generic Statistical Informational Model (GSIM) as a new way for managing statistical production. Mr. Gamez presented the main recommendations from the Global Assessments related to the modernization of statistical production. He insisted in particular on the coordination of National Statistical System (NSS), the organizational structure of National Statistical Offices (NSO) as well as data processing from the data collection to the dissemination of statistical information.

Mr. Marlen Jigitekov from the UNECE Statistical Division presented the Standards for statistical data dissemination in the context of increasing demand for information and the development of new technologies. He introduced participants PC-Axis dissemination tools. The latter is a non-commercial software, developed by the Nordic countries, with a simple user interface. Ms. Gulzenep Mursabekova, Head of Census Department of NSC of the Kyrgyz Republic, illustrated the advantage of the PC-Axis environment with the recent experience of Kyrgyzstan with the implementation of this dissemination tool. The objective of this session was also to prepare representatives from SPECA countries to the High-level Seminar on Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services, to be organized with the support of the Russian Federation in St. Petersburg on 3 – 5 October 2012. UNECE and Statistics Norway reiterated their commitment to support SPECA countries in the streamlining and modernisation of their statistical production.

The **third session**, chaired by Mr. Dinč, was built on the outcome of the Workshop on the Implementation Plans for the 2008 System of National Accounts (29.11-2.12.2012, Kiev), jointly organized by UNECE, UNSD, EFTA, and the Special Session for Economies in Transition organised by EFTA, Eurostat and UNECE in the framework of the 11th meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts (30.04 – 4.05.2012, Geneva). Mr. Hallgrímur Snorrason, invited expert and former Director General of Statistics Iceland discussed the necessity of integrated economic statistics for improving the coherence and international comparability of the data; this being a prerequisite for the production of high-quality national accounts. He insisted on the necessity to improve the coordination of national statistical systems and explained the concept of coherence from the user and the producer perspectives. It was stressed that coordination must include the use of primary data, application of international definitions, methods and classifications but also for all producers of official statistics to document their production processes and quality checks. Mr. Olav Ljones, Deputy Director General at Statistics Norway, presented Statistical business registers as a prerequisite for integrated economic statistics. The presentation was based on the longstanding experience of Statistics Norway in the use of administrative data for the production of official statistics and the management of statistical

registers. This contribution allowed participants to exchange views and share experiences related to the development, maintenance and use of statistical business registers. The latter is contributing to a more integrated approach to structural economic statistics and providing an exhaustive frame for the production of macroeconomic statistics and related economic analyses.

Mr. Vladimir Sokolin, Chairman of CIS-STAT, explained during his presentation the contribution of his organisation to the development and harmonisation of statistical nomenclatures and classifications for the CIS Countries followed by a report from Mr. Gamez on the plans developed by the SPECA countries, with the support from UNECE and EFTA for the implementation of 2008 System of National Accounts. He explained that in 2012, the partner organisation conducted a survey among EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia countries) and SEE (South-East Europe countries) to collect information on major issues and challenges in the implementation of the 2008 SNA. In parallel, a workshop for countries with economies in transition took place in May 2012 in Geneva and a Workshop on the Implementation Plans for the 2008 System of National Accounts in Kiev in November 2012. These activities allowed the partner organisations to identify future needs for technical assistance, to provide recommendations and to set-up, for each country, a reasonable timeframe for the implementation of the 2008 SNA. Furthermore, recommendations for the improvement of business and macro-economic statistics were also provided in the framework of Global Assessments of National Statistical Systems conducted in most SPECA countries. Supporting material, guidelines and other documents available on the UNECE website have been produced in English and Russian, including draft implementation plan tables for SPECA countries.

In his contribution, Mr. Wass stressed that the system of macroeconomic statistics consists mainly of the 2008 SNA, the 6th edition of the Manual on Balance of Payments and International Investment Position from 2009 (BPM6), the 2001 Manual on Government Finance Statistics (GFSM 2001) soon to be replaced by a revised edition, and last but not least the Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics from 2000 (MFSM 2000). This patchwork of systems was developed gradually to meet different and specific users' needs but is based on the same basic concepts and therefore is to a large extent consistent. Discrepancies between economic indicators provided by these different statistics are thus mainly due to different data sources and compilation practices. He concluded by insisting on the fact that the implementation of the revised manuals (SNA, BPM, GFS) should be used as an opportunity to harmonize and synchronize also in practice the major parts of macroeconomic statistics, hence providing a more mutually consistent economic picture enabling better policy decisions.

Mr. Dzhanbulat Baizhumanov, First Deputy Chairman of NSC Kyrgyzstan, Ms. Galiya Ismurzina, Director of the Department of National Accounts in Statistics Kazakhstan as well as Mr. Nuro Suleymanov, Head of National Accounts and Macroeconomic Indicators and Mr. Azad

Abbasaliyev Head of Industry and Construction Statistics, both from the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan presented their respective plans and challenges in the framework of the implementation of the 2008 SNA. Participants stressed that the major issues in the implementation of the new system are related not only to definitions and methodologies related to the 2008 SNA but further more to issues concerning the quality of basic economic and business statistics.

During the concluding session the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) of the PWGS prepared by the UNECE were discussed and eventually approved with few changes. Participants welcomed the new orientation of the PWGS with the objective to (i) promote and coordinate capacity building programmes and activities in SPECA member countries; (ii) promote the compliance of national statistical methodology and dissemination practices with international guidelines and recommendations; (iii) stimulate the exchange of best national practices among SPECA member countries; and (iv) secure funds and technical assistance for statistical capacity building operations from multilateral and bilateral donors. Mr. Gamez informed participants that the revised ToR will have to be submitted to SPECA Governing Council for approval. *[The SPECA Governing Council approved the ToR of the PWGS in November 2012].*

All participants thanked the organisers and the hosting country for the excellent organisation of the 7th PWGS and the very constructive discussions and exchange of experience. They stressed the importance of having such kind of meetings not only in Geneva but also in the SPECA region, ideally every second year.

The materials of the meeting are available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.10.speca.html>

Thematic focus	Venue	Date	Total participants
Statistics	Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan	28-29 August 2012	23