

Project Concept Note Template for the follow-up meeting of the 2010 SPECA Economic Forum

Ashgabat 7-8 June 2011

Project Title	Economic Statistics Capacity Building	
Outcome	Increased capacity of SPECA member countries to produce economic statistics in strengthened intra-regional cooperation and according to international recommendations	
Indicative Funding Requirements	Total estimated budget:	\$ 630,200
Potential Sources of Funding	[Donor(s): [Development Bank(s): Other Resources:	No funding pledged so far
Expected start date	June 2012	
Expected Duration	3-5 years	
Implementing Organisation(s)	UNECE Statistical Division	
Country/Countries	All SPECA countries	
Submitted by	UNECE Statistical Division	
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1 Background

There is a need for good statistical indicators to analyse economic integration, as well as stability and sustainability of development in the SPECA countries. While over the last decade there have been some improvements in official statistics in the region, there is still lack of relevant and reliable economic statistics. This is an obstacle for efficient economic policy, for economic development and trade and for the societies as a whole. It also hampers regional and international comparisons. Good quality statistics would improve the monitoring of areas of interest to the SPECA programme, i.e. the economy, trade, economic integration and sustainable development.

While the SPECA countries have different levels of statistical capacities, there are marked similarities in their statistical systems which call for stronger cooperation within the region. All SPECA countries would benefit from enhanced long-term cooperation between their national experts. Some countries are lagging behind and where national conditions are not favourable participation in activities at the regional and international level is much needed.

UNECE Statistical Division (UNECE-STAT) has a long tradition of regional and bilateral cooperation with the SPECA countries and recognized experience in their particular problems and challenges. For example, the UNECE-STAT conducts global assessments of national statistical systems on request of the countries. Most recently UNECE-STAT participated in the global assessment of Azerbaijan in 2010, was leading the global assessment of Kazakhstan in 2008, and is preparing a global assessment for Kyrgyzstan. The purpose is to help the countries developing their statistics and offer publicly available information about the national statistical systems.

UNECE-STAT carries out capacity building activities in cooperation with national statistical offices and international organisations (e.g. UNSD, IMF, EFTA, Eurostat and CIS-STAT). In 2008, UNECE-STAT initiated assistance to East European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries in improving their economic statistics. In 2010, UNECE-STAT launched a full capacity building project on economic statistics with a specific focus on the SPECA countries. This project, financed by the World Bank, includes a series of regional workshops on key economic indicators, seasonal adjustment, price statistics and national accounts that will take place in 2011-2012. UNECE-STAT will also coordinate work in the region for implementation of the new 2008 System of National Accounts.

2 Justification

Over the last decade the SPECA member countries have made some progress in producing economic statistics. There remain, however, many challenges in compiling them according to international standards and recommendations. The lack of relevant and comparable economic statistics hampers evidence-based decision making and prevents the development of indicators on vulnerabilities (e.g. income and poverty measurements) and economic sustainability. The recent economic and financial crisis highlighted these problems.

Many international standards for producing economic statistics have changed recently, e.g. the classification of economic activity, ISIC, and the System of National Accounts. The SPECA countries that still experience difficulties implementing the old standards are, therefore, at risk to further lag behind. There is a significant need for capacity building in economic statistics in the SPECA member countries, including the need for training and training materials in both English and Russian. In addition, there are significant differences in the statistical capacities within the region, that could be addressed with strengthened intra-regional cooperation.

The proposed project can build upon and carry forward the results of the previous project on capacity building in economic statistics that is planned to end in mid-2012. The capacity building project supports improvement of basic economic statistics and feeds into other UNECE-STAT activities on initiating new sustainable development indicators and indicators for monitoring the progress towards the Goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The results of this project proposal will include improved skills and indicators for monitoring economic progress and established intra-regional networks. The results could serve the information needs of the related programmes and projects, i.e. trade facilitation and cross-border activities, promoting regional integration, improving information flows and measuring sustainable development.

3 Expected Output(s)

The proposed project activities are expected to lead to the following outputs:

- Increased capacity in production and dissemination of good quality economic statistics for the needs of economic policy making.
- Increased skills in producing key economic indicators, long time series and seasonal adjustment for better identification of changes in the economy.
- Development of concrete plans for implementation of the 2008 SNA in order to improve global comparability of core economic statistics
- Creation of intra-regional networks of experts in support of further integration of the region.

Training material and recommendations will follow internationally agreed statistical standards and recommendations. They aim to support the development of regionally and internationally comparable statistics and streamlining of the publication of statistics. The creation of an intra-regional network of experts in economic statistics and the increased participation in international meetings aims at sustainability of results and further integration in the region. As the specific problem in the region, is the lack of guidelines and material in Russian, all training and the related material will be offered in two languages, English and Russian. Essential guidelines will be translated into both languages.

4 Proposed Approach & Strategy, including Capacity Development Response

Increased knowledge and gradual implementation of internationally agreed standards and methods on key economic statistics will enhance the capability of the national statistical offices to produce and disseminate sound and comparable statistics. This, in turn, leads to more relevant information for decision-making and allows regional and international comparisons.

The project will build on the existing activities of the UNECE-STAT in support of development of economic statistics in the region. Experts from the statistical offices of the SPECA member countries will be involved in the detailed planning of training and sharing of experiences, as will be the experts from the statistically well developed countries and other international organisations (e.g. IMF, EFTA, Eurostat).

The project will work on three levels: international, regional and national. First, it will enable participation of all the SPECA member countries in topical international meetings in statistics. Second, it will offer tailored regional activities to match the specific needs of the region. And third, bilateral missions to support implementation and achievement of sustained results will follow the regional and international activities. These missions aim particularly to support the less advanced countries in the region.

Annual Work Plan

Year:

PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>		TIMEFRAME				PLANNED BUDGET
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Amount
1. Activity: Regional workshops with participants from the SPECA countries, 2012			X		US\$ 56.000	
2. Activity: Regional workshop 2013			X		US\$ 56.000	
3. Activity: Regional workshop 2014			X		US\$ 56.000	
4. Activity: Regional workshop 2015			X		US\$ 56.000	
5. Activity: Regional workshop 2016			X		US\$ 56.000	
6. Activity: Technical assistance missions to countries					US\$ 84.000	
7. Activity: Participation in the Conference of European Statisticians annual plenary		X			US\$ 84.000	
8. Activity: Participation in international expert meetings organised by UNECE					US\$ 100.000	
Programme support and administrative costs 15% UNECE administration fee					US\$ 82.200	
TOTAL					US\$ 630,200	