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Marek Belka meets Javier Solana

On 6-7 November 2006 Mr. Marek Belka, Executive Secretary of the UNECE, visited the Council of the European Union and the European Commission in Brussels. He met with Mr. Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign Policy and Security Policies and Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union. Mr. Belka informed Mr. Solana on the state of implementation of the UNECE reform and spoke about the 60th Anniversary Session of the Commission to be held during the week of 23 April 2007. Mr. Belka and Mr. Solana exchanged views on EU priorities in the East and strategic elements of UNECE activities. They agreed that although both organizations differ in many ways, both aim to promote stability, security and prosperity in a pan-European perspective.

Mr. Belka met also with Ambassador Pierre Morel, the newly appointed EU Special Representative for Central Asia. Mr. Belka informed him about UNECE activities in Central Asia and the SPECA programme. The discussion focused on the geopolitical and economic situation in this region and EU policies. "Central Asia", said Ambassador Morel, is "closer to Europe than we think" and expressed the interest in continuing a high-level informal exchange of information with UNECE.



Among topics raised in the meeting of UNECE Executive Secretary with Mr. László Kovács, Commissioner responsible for taxation and Customs Union, were current developments of the TIR Convention. Issues of general interest, such as challenges in the area of tax harmonization, were also discussed.

Internet gets into statistical raw data reporting

Raw data are those that all of us, citizens or businesses, provide to statistical offices when completing questionnaires for censuses or statistical surveys. As our world becomes more computerized, electronic means are gradually replacing paper. The Conference of European Statisticians, therefore, created a Task Force on Electronic Raw Data Reporting that, together with the European Commission (Eurostat), organized the first joint Work Session on Electronic Raw Data Reporting from 6 to 8 November in Geneva. The aim of the Work Session was to identify the most important issues that deserve further research and international cooperation.

It can be efficient for both – statisticians and respondents

In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises spend an important share of their work time on completing various forms for the public administration. Statistical questionnaires are therefore

seen as an additional burden. Statistical offices see their only chance in obtaining the necessary data from already existing accounting systems. One possible solution



lies in using the XBRL reporting language developed by accountants. The accounting systems, however, do not have the data in a desirable form and structure as needed for statistical purposes, and statisticians work hard on resolving a large number of methodological and technical problems.

Population is also interested in the Internet data collection

Not only for reasons of cost-efficiency, but also because of changes in our living habits, statistical offices have been incited to gravitate towards electronic collection of data. The population, and particularly the younger part of it, prefers to use electronic forms. Canada, Spain, Australia and several other countries are currently experimenting with on-line forms for population censuses. While the youngsters complete their forms on the Web, their parents and grandparents still prefer the paper forms. This complicates the life of statistical offices at present, but they are convinced that they are preparing for the future. Experts estimate that if the electronic response option is used by 30% of respondents, it becomes cost-effective.

Security of respondents is a concern

It seems so easy. We book hotels, buy air tickets, shop for movies and much more



Paolo Garonna, Deputy Executive Secretary, with some of the new interns currently working in the UNECE



cont.

over the Internet. However, how many of us are still worried when we put our credit card number on the on-line form? Yes, there is a security risk, and there is no way to eliminate it, only to minimize the risk according to the nature and sensitivity of data. Imagine that statisticians may ask much more private information, and we do not want to have it revealed. Security for data reporting by individuals and businesses must be much stronger than for e-business. Public/Private Key Infrastructure (PKI), for example, is one of the methods frequently employed for electronic collection of statistical data.

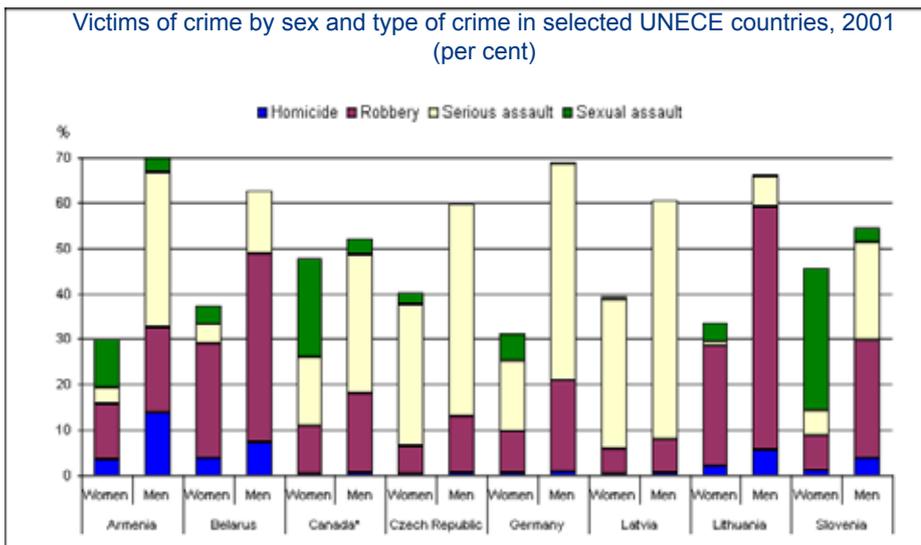
Are there any standard utilities?

So far, there has not been extensive international cooperation on raw data collection. Most of the coordinating and standardizing efforts have been directed toward compiled statistical aggregates. Moreover, the legislative basis for data collection differs from country to country. As a result, it is unlikely that standard software tools would be available to facilitate primary data collection by electronic means. However, there were optimists at the Work Session who believe that we can find common grounds that will enable the shared development of software and other technical tools for raw data collection.

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Facts and figures

How important are gender differences among victims of crime?



Source: UNECE Gender Database

* Data refer to 2000

Definitions: A homicide is intentional or unintentional killing. A robbery is theft of property from a person, overcoming resistance by force or by threat of force. A serious assault is an injury whereby life could be endangered, including cases of injury involving the use of a dangerous instrument. Cases where instruments are used only to threaten are excluded. Sexual assault comprises rape, attempted rape and indecent and sexual assault (offensive behaviour excluded).

Across the UNECE region the recorded crime data show that men much more often than women fall victims of crime. The differential, however, is not always as large as in the extreme cases of our sample (Armenia, Germany or Lithuania). In Canada, for instance, both sexes seem to be affected to a similar degree.

Serious assaults or robberies are the most frequently reported crimes in most countries. Among the victims of each frequently reported crime there is no significant gender difference, except for crimes of sexual assault, where considerably higher numbers of women are reported as victims across the region.

Coming up ...

14-17 November

World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)

15-17 November

Working Party on Rail Transport

15-17 November

Conference of Parties to the Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Rome, Italy)

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