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**UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME AND WORK
OF THE CES TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME
IN JUNE 2007 – JUNE 2008:
MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND PLANS FOR THE REST OF 2008**

Note by the secretariat

**I. COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNECE
REGION (ACTIVITIES 1.1 – 1.4 OF THE UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2008)**

1. Coordination of international statistical activities is the key element of the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The meetings of the CES, its Bureau and frequent working level contacts have made the coordination of work between UNECE and Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations a well-established regular practice. In addition to the UNECE member countries, the work of the Conference and its Teams of Specialists also attracts several countries outside the region, like Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and South Africa.

2. The Conference meets every year in June at a plenary session that consists of three parts: one session devoted to formal business and two seminar sessions. One seminar explores the fundamental issues of statistical systems and the other one the leading-edge emerging topics. In June 2008, the CES considers “Strategic issues linked to the measurement of international

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transactions” at a seminar organized by IMF and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, and “Measuring population movement and integration in a globalized world” at a seminar organized by Germany and Eurostat.

3. In June 2008, the CES will discuss the report of the Joint UNECE /Eurostat/OECD Working Group on measuring sustainable development – the result of two years of intensive work to develop a framework for measuring sustainable development. Furthermore, the Conference will consider the outcomes of the in-depth reviews made by the CES Bureau in five statistical areas: business statistics, statistics on income, living conditions and poverty, gender statistics, culture statistics and environment statistics. The role of statistical metadata in the production of official statistics will also be discussed.

4. The proceedings of the 2007 seminar on measuring capital have been published by UNECE and Statistics Netherlands.

5. UNECE carried out in the first part of 2008 a Survey on donor activities in the field of statistics in Central Asia. The results of this Survey will be discussed at the SPECA Programme Working Group Meeting on 13 June 2008 and presented to the CES Bureau in October 2008.

6. The UNECE Statistical Division is cooperating with the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to achieve better coordination of UNECE, UNESCAP and SIAP in supporting the countries in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus.

II. COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATION OF MACROECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS (ACTIVITIES 2.1, 3.1-3.2 AND 4.1-4.4 OF THE UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2008)

7. The UNECE Statistical Division collects data from the UNECE member countries, either directly from national producers or indirectly from other international organizations. These data are verified, analysed and adjusted where needed to ensure comparability between countries and across time. The data, together with information on the sources and definitions, are disseminated through the on-line database system. The main focus is on providing data about the CIS and South-East European (SEE) countries.

8. The economic time series in the public database include national accounts aggregates and other key macroeconomic indicators (price indices and interest rates, industrial production and wages, external economic relations). The series in international comparable prices (Purchasing Power Parities) have been revised in line with the results of the 2005 International Comparison Programme. The price indices (CPI and PPI), balance of payments, interest rates and wages and salaries statistics have been reviewed. The revised statistics are more comparable across countries and timelines has been improved. Seasonally adjusted data are being introduced for selected macro-economic series.

9. The social and demographic series (Gender Statistics Database) include data on population, families and households, employment, education, public life and decision-making, health, and crime and violence. A broader set of tables will be available as of September 2008, following a revision of the database contents made by the Task-Force on the UNECE Gender Database and the data collection exercise carried out over the last year. Additional topics are being included, such as life balance between work and family, information and communication technologies and time use.

10. The transport statistics database maintained by the UNECE Transport Division is also available through the data dissemination platform of the Statistical Division (PC-Axis).

11. The public database is available in both English and Russian. The Russian language interface will be expanded to cover all data sets.

12. The work on improving the quality and coverage of statistics in the on-line database continued. The improvements are following the recommendations of the external review of the databases carried out in 2006. All methodological information has been reviewed and made available to on-line users. The availability of statistics for Lichtenstein, San Marino, Monaco and Andorra has been investigated with the aim to have data also for these countries uploaded in the on-line database.

13. The use of the public database is constantly monitored. The demand for data has been growing strongly over the last year, as a result of targeted marketing activities and the release of new data sets.

14. In 2008, it is planned to upgrade the database software to comply with the latest standards, and to better meet user needs. The quality framework for the collection, processing and dissemination of data will be fully implemented, with a particular focus on improving timeliness. The user interface will be simplified where possible, with the addition of new material to help explain statistical concepts and terminology.

III. METHODOLOGICAL WORK IN VARIOUS STATISTICAL AREAS

15. The methodological work towards new or revised statistical standards and guidelines continued. Most expert meetings held in the various subject areas were organized as joint meetings with other international organizations, mainly with Eurostat, OECD, UNDP, WB, IMF and CIS-STAT. In addition to providing substantive inputs to and secretarial support for these meetings, the role of the UNECE secretariat is to allow for the non-EU and non-OECD countries of the UNECE region to be associated with the development work of the partner organizations. Another role that the UNECE plays is to provide a bridge for the European-based specialized UN agencies with the national statistical offices in the region.

16. The methodological work is undertaken with support, both financial and mainly in kind contributions, from the National Statistical Offices of the CES member countries as well as from major partner international organizations.

A. Economic statistics (Activities 5.1 – 5.5 of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2008)

17. The UNECE secretariat has been involved in the process of the current update of the 1993 System of **National Accounts** (SNA93) at a global level through its participation in the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) and the Advisory Expert Group on the SNA update, and through its contribution to the consultation with the countries in the UNECE region. Special attention is paid to ensure that the CIS and SEE countries are well informed of the process and their opinion on the revision issues is taken into account. At the beginning of 2008, a survey on the use of employment data in national accounts and measures of productivity in the CIS and Western Balkan countries was completed. Follow up work is foreseen for 2010.

18. The results of the survey on National Practices in Measuring the **Non-Observed Economy** have been published. The publication provides data and information on methods used to measure the non-observed economy in 43 countries (the publication is available on Internet at <http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/NOE2008.pdf>). Two seminars on Measuring the Non-Observed Economy in National Accounts were organised within the framework of the UN Development Account Project: a seminar at the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Tajikistan in Dushanbe (14-16 November 2007) and a special session (21-22 April 2008) at the time of the Meeting on National Accounts in Geneva (see also para 48). The seminar in Geneva focused on measuring illegal activities, services provided by private entrepreneurs and owner-occupied housing. The meeting also considered the measurement of capital services and Research and Development in the context of the SNA 93 update.

19. The Statistical Division is actively involved in work on emerging issues that are of interest to both developed and transition economies, such as measurement of the impact of **globalisation** on national accounts and related statistics. In June 2007 the CES created a Working Group in cooperation with OECD, Eurostat, and IMF to explore how statistical offices can cope more effectively with the distortions to national accounts that are occurring as a result of the globalisation phenomenon. The first meeting of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group on impact of globalisation on national accounts (WGGNA) took place in April 2008 and reviewed a list of problem areas related to globalisation that will be included in its research agenda. Following a request from the ISWGNA, the Expert Group also agreed to develop operational guidelines on treating goods for processing and merchanting in national accounts as part of its output. The guidelines will assist the implementation of the SNA Rev.1. Within the technical assistance framework, the UNECE organised a workshop on globalization and its effect on national accounts in Kiev, Ukraine in cooperation with EFTA and the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine (3-6 July 2007) and a seminar on introduction to the SNA Rev.1 in Yerevan, Armenia (29-31 October 2008).

20. The UNECE aims at ensuring that CIS and SEE countries are able to catch up in the implementation of statistical **business registers** – an indispensable tool for an efficient system of data collection from businesses. UNECE organized and hosted the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on Business Registers on 18-19 June 2007. The meeting discussed the relation between globalisation and business statistics, the development of statistical outputs from business registers, quality improvements and the use of administrative data. The questionnaires for the 2008 survey on business registers in the UNECE countries that are not

members of EU were sent out in April 2008. The survey is conducted in cooperation with Eurostat. The UNECE also took an active role in the October 2007 meeting of the Wiesbaden City Group on Business registers and is a member of its steering group.

21. UNECE and ILO organized the joint meeting on **Consumer Price Indices (CPI)** on 8-9 May 2008 focusing on collection and processing of price data and integration of price indices in national statistical offices. A special meeting was held on 7 May for countries with economies in transition and developing countries to deal with the practical implementation of the *Consumer Price Index Manual* and the forthcoming *Practical Guide to Compiling Consumer Price Indexes: A supplementary handbook to the International Manual on CPIs*.

22. In addition, UNECE contributes to the revision of the existing manuals on CPIs and PPIs, and to the forthcoming Export and Import Price Index (XMPI) Manual. In cooperation with ILO a user survey of national statistical offices on the usefulness of the CPI Manual was conducted in 2007. The results, which will be used for the revision of the electronic version of the CPI Manual, will be published on the web in 2008. A technical assistance mission on CPI and PPI compilation to Ukraine was conducted in November 2007.

23. The UNECE took over the chair and the secretariat of the Intersecretariat Working Group of Price Statistics (IWGPS) in March 2007, and has organized meetings of the Group in October 2007 and May 2008. In order to improve coordination of work between the joint UNECE/ILO meetings on Consumer Price Indices (CPI), the Ottawa Group and the IWGPS, the frequency of the Ottawa Group meetings has been changed to every second year to alternate with the Joint CPI meetings. The Joint CPI meetings will concentrate on practical and implementation issues while the Ottawa Group will focus on methodological development. Mutual representation has been established between the Organising Committee of the joint CPI meeting, the Steering Committee of the Ottawa Group and the IWGPS.

24. In the field of **economic short-term statistics**, the UNECE work aims at helping to improve the international comparability of data from the CIS and SEE countries for key indicators such as industrial production and price indices. A pilot project on seasonal adjustment methods and a project on the international comparability of short-term statistics in CIS and South-East European countries have been completed. A report of the work on short-term statistics and seasonal adjustment, including suggestions for further activities, was presented to the CES Bureau meeting in February 2008. Following consultations with the countries, experimental seasonally adjusted Industrial Production Index statistics have been published in the on-line database.

25. The international Handbook on Rural Households, Livelihood and Well-being: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income was published in September 2007. The Handbook is available from FAO, UNECE and other organizations. An electronic version is available on Internet. With the publication of this handbook, UNECE ceases to be active in the area of agricultural statistics.

B. Social and demographic statistics (Activities 6.1 –6.10 of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2008)

26. UNECE provides support to countries for the production of comparable social and demographic data, particularly in the areas of population and housing censuses (in cooperation with Eurostat), migration statistics, gender statistics (in cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNFPA and FAO), measurement of health status (in cooperation with Eurostat and WHO) and measurement of quality of work. Technical assistance is provided to CIS and SEE countries on the implementation of standards in these areas.

27. In the area of **population and housing censuses**, the UNECE has continued to support countries in the implementation of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses, adopted by the CES in June 2006. The annual ECE-Eurostat Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses was held in May 2008 to discuss census quality assurance and evaluation, difficult-to-measure topics and data editing and validation. A workshop on Communication and Dissemination of Census Results was also organized back-to-back to the meeting, jointly with the UNECE Work Session on Statistical Communication and Dissemination.

28. Technical assistance activities in 2008 targeted the countries of South East Europe, following the series of regional workshops conducted in Central Asia in 2006-2007. A training workshop was organized (in collaboration with UNFPA) in Sarajevo in February 2008 covering issues such as census management, methodology, and field operations. Census information content was also covered, including what population should be counted, and issues on the measurement of migration and ethno-cultural characteristics in censuses. A set of five multimedia presentations on population and housing censuses were produced by UNECE (in cooperation with UNFPA that provided the funding). The multimedia presentations are also available at the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/stats/census/>). The publication on countries' practices in the 2000 Census round is also available on the above mentioned website in both English and Russian languages. The publication is currently in print.

29. **Gender statistics** continued to be one of the areas of major involvement of UNECE. In addition to the maintenance of the gender statistics website and database, national workshops were conducted in Moldova, Kazakhstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Tajikistan. The Joint UNECE/World Bank Institute Workshop on National Gender Statistics Training Programs was held in Rome, Italy. For these training events, training tools on gender statistics (such as multimedia presentations and activities for national training) were developed in collaboration with the World Bank, UNFPA, FAO and UNDP. These tools have been used in regional and national training events to improve the availability and quality of gender statistics, particularly in the CIS and SEE countries. The *Training Manual on Gender Statistics* is planned to be finalized by mid-2008.

30. The UNECE continues to offer a unique forum for statisticians, researchers and policy makers to improve the measurement of **gender based violence**. UNECE coordinated the work of the task force that reviewed the methods used in national surveys to measure violence against women (VAW). A meeting was also organized in October 2007 on VAW indicators (in collaboration with the UN Division for Advancement of Women and the other UN regional

commissions). The meeting initiated work to implement the UN Resolution (A/RES/61/143) calling on developing a set of possible indicators to assist countries in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

31. In the area of **migration statistics**, a feasibility study of using receiving countries' data to estimate emigration in sending countries was carried out and draft recommendations were prepared. The UNECE developed, in collaboration with the Task Force on measuring emigration, the framework for the data exchange and coordinated inputs from the participating countries. The work continues on (i) preparing a compilation of current/emerging practices used in NSOs to measure groups that are difficult to count, such as illegal, temporary and "circulatory" migrants; (ii) developing definitions and classifications to standardize survey tools to collect data on remittances (in collaboration with the World Bank).

32. UNECE participates in the Task Force on the **measurement of the quality of employment** and its Steering Committee. The Task Force was established in June 2007 to revise and streamline the Conceptual Framework for Measuring the Quality of Employment and to test the feasibility (validity) of proposed indicators. The Steering Committee, under the leadership of Statistics Canada has redrafted the dimensions part of the Conceptual Framework and prepared the guidelines for indicator analysis. The Steering Committee is currently reviewing the preliminary results of the analytical work on specific indicators undertaken by individual countries. These will be discussed in detail during the first meeting of the Task Force on 12-13 June 2008 in Paris.

33. The UNECE/UNODC Task Force on **victim surveys** is working on the finalization of the manual on victimization surveys (planned to be completed by the end of 2008).

34. UNECE continued to coordinate and contribute to work of the Steering Group and Task Force on the measurement of **health status** (the so-called Budapest Initiative).

35. UNECE provides statistical support to the CIS and SEE countries to **monitor achievement of the Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) and improving the use of statistics for policy making and monitoring. UNECE continued the partnership with the regional offices of UNICEF and UNDP. It also leads the joint Task Force on MDG statistics. The Task Force is finalizing the work to update the Regional MDG Info, which is planned to be launched during 2008. The assessment of countries' capacity to produce and disseminate MDG relevant statistics carried out by the Task Force is now in print. A proposal has been submitted for external funding for the involvement of countries in the development of the MDG database framework and for supporting countries in improving the production and dissemination of MDG-relevant data.

C. Cross-cutting issues in statistics (Activities 7.1 – 7.7 of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2008)

36. The UNECE secretariat provides a unique forum where information systems managers from national and international statistical offices can share experience with other countries. The Steering Group on **Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS)** organizes events where the information systems managers discuss issues related to (i) governance, management and strategies of statistical information systems; (ii) architecture of statistical information

systems; and (iii) software sharing, open source software and software consortia for statistical applications. These activities, where the UNECE plays a leading role, are undertaken jointly with the OECD and Eurostat, and with an active participation of the International Monetary Fund. A Task Force aimed at preparing proposals for sharing of statistical software and components, as well as collaboration in development of statistical tools was created by MSIS participants in April 2008. MSIS will report the outcomes of the Task Force to the Bureau of the Conference as well as appropriate bodies of Eurostat and OECD.

37. A forum on **statistical dissemination and communication** is provided by the UNECE secretariat. This work focuses on strategic issues related to the communication of statistics, such as building relationships with the media and users of statistics, ethics and independence, providing appropriate access to statistical information, product development, costing models, statistical literacy and related education programs. To complement the previously published *Making Data Meaningful: a guide to writing stories about numbers* (2005), the Steering Group is now developing a *Style Guide for the Presentation of Data and Graphics*. It will focus on recommended practices for the effective presentation of tables, graphs and maps in various contexts. Such a guide was requested by participants at the May 2008 Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication and will draw upon existing examples and materials.

38. The website outlining some of the recommended practices in **electronic data reporting** has been released at <http://www.unece.org/stats/erdr/>. The future updating of the website will be undertaken in collaboration with the Collection of Raw Data (CoRD) group of Eurostat. For this purpose, Eurostat has opened CoRD for participation from non-EU countries. UNECE also continued facilitating the international cooperation on **statistical data editing**. The current work comprises emerging topics, such as editing nearer the sources of data, editing of data from combined and administrative sources, and interaction between editing and imputation and statistical disclosure control. The Knowledge Base on Statistical Data Editing has been transferred to the UNECE website: <http://www.unece.org/stats/k-base>.

39. In the field of **confidentiality and microdata access**, a Joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Statistical Data Confidentiality was held in Manchester, United Kingdom in December 2007. The Task Force on confidentiality and privacy aspects of statistical data integration has prepared a draft version of principles for integrated data sets. These were discussed by the Bureau of the Conference in February 2008. The final version of the principles is planned to be presented to the June 2009 CES plenary session.

40. The CES Bureau recently called for strengthening the work in the field of **statistical metadata**. The UNECE aims to: (i) provide guidance to national statistical offices in the use of metadata related standards through the Common Metadata Framework (CMF, see: <http://www.unece.org/stats/cmf/>); and (ii) advocate for a corporate role of metadata in managing statistical activities, addressing the senior management level of national statistical offices. Current work is focused on updating the guidelines on metadata advocacy (Metadata in the Corporate Context), documenting and analysing case studies on metadata management practices, agreeing on common terminology and a Generic Statistical Business Process Model, and identifying the relationships between existing metadata standards. The Steering Group will organize focused workshops aimed at developing the different parts of the CMF. A web site for

collecting and maintaining case studies about current metadata management practices in statistical organizations (METIS-wiki) is expected to become available during 2008.

41. Following the recommendations of the 2005 CES Seminar on Measurement of **Sustainable Development**, the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD) and its Steering Group have worked intensively to develop a framework for statistics on sustainable development. The mandate of the group was to develop a broad conceptual framework for measuring sustainable development with the concept of capital at its centre, and to identify a small set of indicators that might become the core set for international comparisons. As a result of two years of productive cooperation, the WGSSD has prepared the *Report on measuring sustainable development*. The Bureau reviewed the Report in February 2008. The report is presented as a research paper for discussion at the CES plenary session in June 2008.

42. The Statistical Division in cooperation with Statistics Canada and the Czech Statistical Office is preparing a Forum on **Human Resources Management and Training** that will take place in Skopje on 3-5 September 2008. The Forum is a follow-up to the CES Human Resources and Training Seminar in June 2006. The Forum aims at facilitating the exchange of experience and best practices among Human Resources Managers of national statistical offices and managers in charge of national statistical programs.

IV. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO UNECE MEMBER COUNTRIES (ACTIVITIES 8.1 – 8.3 OF THE UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2008)

43. An important part of the work is to assist the CIS and South-East European countries in **building and improving their statistical capacity** by organising seminars and workshops, providing advisory services, promoting the implementation of international standards and recommendations, transmitting best practices, and promoting exchange of experience. UNECE also helps countries to implement the **UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics** by giving advice on statistical legislation and institutional frameworks, and on how to ensure the independence and impartiality of official statistics, especially in countries with economies in transition.

44. The Statistical Division provided bilateral technical assistance at the request of CIS and SEE countries in various statistical areas. In particular, **advisory services** were provided to:

- (a) **Armenia** - on national accounts, non-observed economy and related areas;
- (b) **Bosnia-Herzegovina** - on institutional aspects of organizing a statistical system and on statistical legislation;
- (c) **Kazakhstan** - on engendering statistical information, MDG indicators and statistical literacy, violence against women, and development of a service database for aggregated statistical information (four workshops or advisory missions); in April 2008 an advisory mission was carried out on development of a dissemination strategy of the Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan;
- (d) **Moldova** - on the implementation of a dissemination strategy of statistical information;
- (e) **Montenegro** - on establishing a national system of official statistics;

- (f) **Tajikistan** - on national accounts, non-observed economy and related areas;
- (g) **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**– on the importance of statistical information in evidence-based decision making processes, in cooperation with UNDP and UNICEF;
- (h) **Ukraine** - on implementation of international standards in the field of economic statistics and National Accounts, and the development of price statistics (one international seminar and one advisory mission).

45. A **Global Assessment** of the National Statistical System of Kazakhstan was carried out together with the Statistics Division of UNESCAP in September 2007 – February 2008. Furthermore, the Director of the UNECE Statistical Division was one of the peers involved in the review of one of the EU national statistical offices with respect to the Code of Practice of the EU statistical system, a set of principles that are closely related to the UN Fundamental Principles.

46. Training workshops were organized and training materials developed in **gender statistics** (jointly with the World Bank Institute, UNDP, UNFPA and FAO). Regional and national training events were carried out in 2007 under the World Bank funded project using the innovative training module developed by UNECE and the World Bank.

47. The UNECE has finalized the implementation of the project on MDG **Statistical Literacy** funded by UNDP. In addition to the two training workshops organised in Georgia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2006, training was provided in Kazakhstan in June 2007.

48. In the field of **Population and Housing Censuses**, technical assistance activities in 2008 were targeted to South Eastern Europe, with a project funded by UNFPA. A training workshop was organized in Sarajevo in February 2008 for countries in South Eastern Europe. In the framework of the same project, a set of five multimedia presentations on population and housing censuses were produced by UNECE and used in the training workshop (for more details on these activities, see para. 25 above)

49. The Development Account Project for statistical capacity building in Central Asia as part of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) has continued to be implemented in the reporting period. The StatCapCA Project focuses on 3 areas of statistical capacity building: **population and housing censuses**, measurement of the **health status** of the population and defining and measuring **non-observed economy**. Seven workshops/seminars have been organized by the UNECE: three workshops on population and housing censuses (in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan), one on disability statistics (Kyrgyzstan) and three on measuring the non-observed economy (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Geneva Switzerland, in connection with the meeting on National Accounts). As part of the Health component of the StatCapCA Project, UNECE provided organisational and financial assistance to the UNESCAP Regional Workshop on Promoting Disability Data Collection through the 2010 Population and Housing Censuses held in Bangkok.

50. A national training course on international **migration statistics** was organized together with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in Tajikistan in April 2008.

51. The Statistical Division has actively participated in the Task Team developing a global **Reporting system on activities on technical cooperation in the field of statistics** under the umbrella of the Coordination Committee of Statistical Activities. Recommendations worked out in this project have also been implemented in the Survey on donor activities in the field of statistics in Central Asia.

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