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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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PROGRESS REPORTS

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR  
EUROPE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME IN JUNE 2008 – JUNE 2009:  
MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND PLANS FOR THE REST OF 2009**

Note by the secretariat

**I. COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNITED  
NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE REGION (activities 1.1 – 1.3 of  
the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

1. The Conference of European Statisticians continued to **coordinate the international statistical activities** in the region, which is the key element of its work. The Conference provides a forum for the Heads of national and international statistical agencies to address the most relevant issues of official statistics. The Conference also attracts membership from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region. Countries like Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and more recently South Africa regularly participate in its activities. Participation of the major international organizations (Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Statistical Division, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc.) helps to ensure that statistical work undertaken by these organizations in the UNECE region is coordinated and duplication is avoided.

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2. The work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) has often been highlighted as an example for ensuring an efficient coordination of international work in the region. Recently UNECE has been asked to share the experience of the work of the CES with other regional commissions, namely the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

3. The Conference meets every year in June at a **plenary session** for two and a half days, which consists of three parts: one session devoted to formal business and two seminar sessions. The first seminar in 2009 deals with balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate to produce policy relevant data. The Conference looks at what defines “official” statistics and the relationship between statisticians and policy makers. It also considers how to achieve accountability of statistical systems to the government and taxpayers for making good use of the public funds allocated for the production of official statistics. The second seminar is devoted to the strategic issues in business statistics. It focuses on new domains and user needs in business statistics, and reduction of respondent burden.

4. An important part of the work of the Conference is to discuss and adopt **statistical standards and guidelines** in the UNECE region. In June 2009, the Conference will consider three methodological materials for endorsement:

- a) Principles on confidentiality and privacy aspects of statistical data integration;
- b) Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries;
- c) Manual on victimization surveys.

5. A major activity of the Bureau of the CES is to carry out **in-depth reviews** of statistical areas. The aim of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region, identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. The reviews often lead to specific follow-up actions to address the identified problems. In 2008-2009, the CES Bureau reviewed in-depth agriculture statistics, statistics on labour cost and housing statistics. The June 2009 plenary session will discuss the topic of statistical dissemination, communication and publications. The outcome of the discussions will be used as an input to the in-depth review that will be carried out by the Bureau in October 2009.

6. The **Database of International Statistical Activities** (DISA) is maintained by the UNECE secretariat. The Database provides information on the statistical work carried out by about 30 international organizations<sup>1</sup>. The UNECLAC has been interested in building a similar tool for coordinating statistical activities in their region and have asked the UNECE Statistical Division for advice and help in establishing such a database. The National Statistical Institute of Mexico is also interested in using the tool for coordinating the statistical activities undertaken by the various international agencies in Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://unece.unog.ch/disa/>

## II. COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATION OF MACROECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS (activities 2.1 – 4.5 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)

7. The UNECE maintains a free **online statistical database**<sup>2</sup> available in English and Russian, covering the countries of the UNECE region. The database **includes macro-economic, social, demographic, transport and forestry statistics** (the latter two provided by the UNECE Transport Division and Timber Section of the Trade Division respectively). An important feature is that gender breakdown is included where possible in social and demographic statistics. New data on employment (including a new series of monthly unemployment data), education, decision-making, families and households, and crime were added during 2008-2009, as well as seasonally adjusted data for selected macro-economic series and revised Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) data.

8. Data downloads for 2008 were over 60% higher than those for 2007, and have continued to grow during the first half of 2009. A user survey during late 2008 and early 2009 gave very positive feedback about the usefulness of the database. In 2009, the online statistical databases will be continuously updated and the user interface will be improved.

9. Work has started in 2009 to establish **a new regional database on indicators to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals**. The database will include disaggregations of existing indicators and possibly additional indicators particularly relevant for countries in the UNECE region. The database is expected to be available in the course of 2010.

10. The UNECE secretariat will also contribute to UNdata - an initiative led by the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) to create a new internet-based data service for the global user community through a single portal.

## III. METHODOLOGICAL WORK IN VARIOUS STATISTICAL AREAS

11. The Conference continued to be involved in work that leads to development of new statistical standards and guidelines in several areas of economic and social statistics. Work was also undertaken to contribute to development of standards at the global level, such as the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) and guidelines to measure violence against women.

12. Most expert meetings held in the various subject areas were organized as joint meetings with other international organizations, mainly with Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Statistical Committee of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT).

13. In addition to providing substantive inputs to and secretariat support for these meetings, the role of the UNECE secretariat has been to allow for the non-European Union (EU) and non-

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<sup>2</sup> [www.unece.org/stats/data](http://www.unece.org/stats/data)

OECD countries of the UNECE region 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 (e.g. ILO, WHO) with the national statistical offices in the region.

14. The methodological work is undertaken with support, 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 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

15. In the course of 2008, the UNECE secretariat contributed to the updating of the global methodological standard for **national accounting**, the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) with the aim to ensure that the South-East European (SEE) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries are well informed of the process and their opinion is taken into account. UNECE prepared an overview of the progress made with 1993 SNA and the implementation plans for 2008 SNA in the CIS and SEE countries at the end of 2008. The overview was used as an input to the global 2008 SNA implementation strategy, developed by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) and submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2009. The UNECE secretariat will continue to monitor progress and provide assistance to the CIS and SEE countries in the area of national accounts. The Statistical Division has contributed to the development and will contribute to a pilot project “One UN” for Albania in the area of national accounts. The UNECE secretariat will also continue to contribute to the work of the ISWGNA.

16. The Expert Group on the **Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts** (GGNA), organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD, continued its work. The purpose of the Group is to develop recommendations on how to deal with the distortions caused by globalisation to economic statistics and improve the quality of the national accounting. The last meeting of GGNA, held in May 2009, reviewed several topics from the research agenda with the aim of identifying good practices and guidelines on how to handle the impact of globalisation on national accounts. The Group is preparing a report that would give guidance to countries in this area. The report is planned to be finalised by the end of 2010.

17. The UNECE secretariat has extended its activities in the area of economic **short-term statistics** (STS) and provided technical assistance and training courses to a number of CIS and SEE countries. The activities aim at helping countries to implement international standards and recommendations and to improve the quality and international comparability of key short-term development indicators. One of the main issues is the lack of seasonally adjusted STS. The secretariat conducted a pilot project on seasonal adjustment of industrial production indices, and now publishes seasonally adjusted industrial production indices in the macroeconomic database for a number of countries. A detailed survey on seasonal adjustment in the CIS and SEE countries was conducted in 2008 identifying areas where methodological support and training is needed. Three regional workshops on STS methodology and dissemination, seasonal adjustment and consumer price indices are planned to be conducted in 2009-2010.

18. The implementation of statistical **business registers** is an indispensable tool for an efficient system of data collection from businesses. Work has been undertaken to assist the SEE and CIS countries in this area. A survey of statistical business registers in UNECE non-EU member countries was carried out in cooperation with Eurostat. The Report on the survey results was presented at the Paris meeting of the Wiesbaden City Group on Business Registers in November 2008. A Workshop on business registers for the CIS countries will be held in October 2009.

19. The UNECE secretariat plays an active role in the international work on **price statistics**. Currently, the UNECE acts as the secretariat and chair of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (IWGPS). The UNECE secretariat has worked to further improve coordination of international work in price statistics, including better coordination of the joint UNECE/International Labour Office (ILO) meetings on Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the meetings in the Ottawa Group on Price Indices. The secretariat has contributed to the revision of the forthcoming *Export and Import Price Index Manual* and the *Supplementary Handbook: Practical Guide to Compiling Consumer Price Indices*, that will be published by the UNECE in 2009.

#### **B. Social and demographic statistics (activities 6.1 – 6.10 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

20. The work in the area of social and demographic statistics focuses on gender statistics, population and housing censuses, migration statistics, crime statistics and measuring the health status of population.

21. In **gender statistics**, methodological work is carried out as well as provision of technical assistance. Training tools on gender statistics, such as a comprehensive manual on gender statistics, multimedia presentations and training modules, continue to be developed (in collaboration with the World Bank) and used in regional and national training events in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. UNECE is also offering a unique forum for statisticians, researchers, and policy makers to improve the measurement of violence against women.

22. In the area of **population and housing censuses**, the work has been focusing on supporting countries in the implementation of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses. Two population census workshops were organised in South-East Europe and five multimedia presentations to be used for training activities were finalised in 2008<sup>3</sup>.

23. In the field of **migration statistics**, the *Guidelines on the use of immigration data of receiving countries to improve emigration estimates of sending countries* have been finalised and submitted to the CES for approval in June 2009. The Steering Group on Migration Statistics continues to work to improve statistics on international migration by using various sources including household sample surveys, administrative data and population censuses. In this regard, a series of projects have been proposed for the period 2009-2010 (in collaboration with Eurostat,

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/01.01a.e.htm>

the UN Population Division, the United States Census Bureau and National Statistical Offices of other countries) to conduct research, develop methodology and produce a series of products and tools providing practical guidance to national statistical offices, international organizations, and other agencies in both developed and developing countries.

24. In the area of **crime statistics**, the *Manual on victimization surveys*, prepared jointly by UNECE and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) has been finalised and submitted to the CES for approval in June 2009. The manual will provide countries with a useful tool to develop national victimisation surveys under the framework of official statistics. A new proposal is being developed to undertake work, in cooperation with UNODC, in the field of crime classifications to be used for statistical purposes at the international level.

25. Work is progressing in the field of measurement of new forms of **families and households**. The relevant Task Force is completing its work and will submit the final report to the CES Bureau in October 2009. The CES Task Force on measurement of **volunteer work** is also concluding its activities and will submit its final report to the CES Bureau in October 2009. The Task Force provided also inputs to the *ILO Manual on the measurement of volunteer work* that was adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in December 2008.

26. Statistical support is provided to the SEE and CIS countries in **monitoring achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNECE secretariat contributed to the joint report of the five UN Regional Commissions on data discrepancies between national and international estimates for MDG indicators.

27. The rising concern for **quality of employment** impacts both social and economic policy areas across the UNECE region and beyond. There is a pressing need for an internationally agreed framework for its measurement. This work is currently being undertaken by a Task Force consisting of representatives from UNECE, ILO, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Eurostat and several national statistical offices. Over the last year the Task Force has developed a conceptual framework for the measurement of the quality of employment and agreed on a preliminary list of statistical indicators. A validation study of indicators is currently being carried out by the Italian Statistical Office (ISTAT) and Statistics Canada (expected to be finalised by the end of 2009).

### **C. Environment and sustainable development statistics (activities 7.1 – 7.3 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

28. The Statistical Programme for 2009 includes a new cluster dealing with environment and sustainable development statistics to reflect the increasing importance of this area.

29. In 2008, the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group finalised the report on **Measuring Sustainable Development**. The report explores the capital approach to measuring sustainable development and compares the indicators that result from this approach with those in already existing national indicators sets. In this way, it draws the best from the conceptual work

of researchers and the practical work of policy makers and statisticians. The report has been published and is available on the internet<sup>4</sup>.

30. In February 2009, a new Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development was set up to further pursue the conceptual development of the capital approach in identifying indicators to present the long-term dimension of sustainable development. In addition, indicators to present the distributional aspects under each capital indicator will be considered. The first meeting of the Task Force is planned for 23-24 September 2009 in Geneva.

31. Intersectoral work on **environmental indicators** will be undertaken in cooperation with the UNECE Environment, Housing and Land Management Division. A Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators was established and its terms of reference were agreed by the CES Bureau at its October 2008 meeting and by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session held in January 2009. The purpose of the task force is to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national reports on the state of the environment in CIS and SEE countries to improve environmental data collection, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the region. The first meeting of the task force is planned to take place in September 2009. During the meeting a workshop will be organized jointly with UN Statistics Division to train experts from the CIS and SEE countries. Participation of experts from other UNECE countries and international organizations and institutions dealing with environmental indicators is most welcome to broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches.

32. New work related to **climate change** is planned to deal with selected components of the emission inventories from the point of view of official statistics. These inventories are used for the mandatory reporting of countries under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNECE secretariat plans to survey the extent to which the CES members are involved in climate change related work and in compiling the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories. The Statistical Division will also explore the possibilities to contribute to the UNECE climate change activities in areas like transport, energy, forestry and housing, jointly with other UNECE Sectoral Committees. This work is in line with the decision of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the UNECE to undertake work relevant to measurement and mitigation of climate change.

#### **D. Cross-cutting issues (activities 8.1 – 8.6 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

33. The work undertaken under the auspices of the Conference provides forums for informatics managers, methodologists and dissemination experts from national and international statistical organizations to share experiences. Task forces have worked on a number of outputs including a framework for sharing statistical information technology tools between statistical organizations, guiding principles in ensuring confidentiality and privacy in statistical data integration projects, and the development of a style guide on how to present statistics. A special workshop on the statistical business process and metadata case studies was organized in March 2009. Cooperation

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/03.03f.e.htm>

with other agencies has intensified, particularly in the field of statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX).

34. The **dissemination and communication** of statistics remains an area of active involvement for the Conference and its Bureau. A meeting was organised in May 2009 for country experts to promote good practices in communicating with the media, managing customer relationships and outreach, improving statistical literacy and managing the dissemination and communication within a statistical organization.

35. A Forum on **human resources management and training** in statistical offices was held in September 2008, as the first ever of its kind. International work under the Conference will continue in this area with the aim to develop a set of guidelines and best practices. A follow-up workshop on human resources and training in statistical offices is planned to be organised in 2010.

**E. Technical assistance (activities 9.1 – 9.3 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2009)**

36. An important part of the work of the Conference is the provision of assistance to the CIS and SEE countries in building and improving their statistical capacity. This is achieved by organising seminars and workshops, providing advisory services, promoting the implementation of international standards and recommendations, and transmitting best practices. The UNECE secretariat also helps countries in implementing the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, a standard that was adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe in 1992. Advice is provided on statistical legislation and institutional frameworks, and on how to ensure the independence and impartiality of official statistics.

37. In the course of 2008-2009, advisory services were provided to the following countries and in the following areas:

- (a) Azerbaijan - national accounts, non-observed economy and related areas; price statistics and business registers;
- (b) Bosnia-Herzegovina - institutional aspects of organizing a statistical system and statistical legislation;
- (c) Bulgaria – statistical legislation;
- (d) Kazakhstan – statistical legislation, dissemination and marketing, statistical literacy, engendering statistical information, statistical quality issues and price statistics;
- (e) Kyrgyz Republic – Population and Housing Census;
- (f) Montenegro - building a national system of official statistics;
- (g) Republic of Moldova – price statistics;
- (h) Tajikistan - national accounts, non-observed economy and related areas; database development;
- (i) The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - MDG indicators, MDG database; importance of statistical information in evidence-based decision making;
- (j) Ukraine – price statistics.

38. A technical cooperation project is being developed for Albania on national accounts within the framework of "One UN".

39. Two joint UNECE/UN Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UN SIAP) seminars were organised, one in Dushanbe in March 2008 on migration statistics for Tajikistan and one in Tehran, in November 2008 to provide training on short-term economic statistics and price statistics for Central Asian countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Training workshops were organized and training materials developed in gender statistics (jointly with the World Bank Institute, UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO)).

40. Two workshops took place in 2008 within the UN Development Account Project for statistical capacity building under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). The project focused on 3 areas: population and housing censuses, measurement of the health status of population and measuring non-observed economy.

41. UNECE continued, together with Eurostat, Council of Europe and UNSD, to contribute to the preparation of the population and housing census in the UN Administered Region of Kosovo.

42. A Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of Kazakhstan was carried out together with the Statistics Division of UNESCAP and finalised in 2008. A Global Assessment of the Statistical System of Armenia was carried out jointly with Eurostat and EFTA. Two assessment missions have taken place and the Assessment Report is expected to be finalized by the beginning of June 2009.

43. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Statistics was held back-to-back with the 56<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Statisticians in June 2008. The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting was organized in March 2009 in Istanbul. The main theme in the SPECA PWG on Statistics has been support in statistical capacity building for the SPECA member countries. The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting also evaluated the outcome and activities of the StatCapCA project, financed by the UN Development Account in 2006-2009.

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