

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Third Meeting of the 2005/2006 Bureau  
Geneva (Switzerland), 20-21 February 2006

**REPORT OF THE 20-21 FEBRUARY 2006 BUREAU MEETING**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The third meeting of the 2005/2006 Bureau was held in Geneva on 20-21 February 2006. The following members of the Bureau attended: Katherine Wallman (Chairman), Heli Jeskanen-Sundström, Luigi Biggeri, Vladimir Sokolin, and Irena Krizman. The following permanent participants also attended: Pieter Everaers (Eurostat) representing Günther Hanreich, Enrico Giovannini (OECD), Mikhail Korolev (CISTAT), Misha Belkindas (World Bank), and Heinrich Brünger (UNECE). The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Andrey Kosarev of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (Russian Federation), Hans-Werner Schmidt of Eurostat, and Suzann Evinger of the Office of Management and Budget of the United States. Jan Fischer (Czech Republic) reported on the preparations for the Seminar on Human Resources and Training. Ivan Fellegi (Chairman, OECD Statistics Committee), Bela Prigly (Canada), Dennis Trewin (Australia), and Jay Keller (U.S. Census Bureau) participated in the discussion on selected items of the agenda via a teleconference. Lidia Bratanova of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

**II. IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF SELECTED STATISTICAL AREAS**

2. The Bureau reviewed in depth the following statistical areas: quality frameworks and the link with institutional frameworks and principles; statistics on globalization; justice and crime statistics, including the safety concept; and health statistics.

**(a) Quality frameworks and the link with institutional frameworks and principles**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/2 (Statistics Sweden, in cooperation with Eurostat and IMF);

3. The topic was discussed based on a Rapporteur Report prepared by Statistics Sweden, in cooperation with Eurostat and IMF. The following comments were made:

- to include in the paper information about the decision of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) to develop a common quality framework for international organizations; such a framework would eliminate the need for countries to report according to different frameworks to different international organisations;
- the quality reviews require quite a lot of effort and resources from countries, while only two international organizations (Eurostat and IMF) have a quality reporting obligation;
- there is a need to discuss the perception of quality from the user perspective and how to communicate the results of quality reporting in an attractive way;
- it would be beneficial to extend the EU peer reviews also to non-EU countries; however, not all countries are interested in taking part in the peer reviews; and
- implementation of the Total Quality Management process in some countries is a useful starting point to enable comparison with other public organizations, and adherence to certain quality requirements as part of the public sector.

4. The Rapporteur Report will be updated taking note of the comments made during the discussion (**action: Sweden and Eurostat**). The Bureau did not consider it necessary to launch any special CES coordination initiative on quality frameworks.

**(b) Statistics on Globalisation**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/3 (Statistics Canada and ONS, UK)

5. The issue of statistics on globalisation was considered based on a Rapporteur Report prepared by Statistics Canada and ONS, United Kingdom. The following comments were made in the discussion:

- the paper focuses only on economic aspects of globalisation;
- add to para 2 information on Eurostat's work on the enterprise group register;
- correct para 9 to reflect that Foreign Affiliate Trade in Services (FATS) appears in the EU Regulation;
- work is underway in OECD on international outsourcing; a key milestone of this work is the Workshop on Globalisation of Production (Paris, 15-16 November 2005);
- para 18: the OECD Handbook includes many practical suggestions; there are plans to expand the Handbook to non-economic parts of globalisation;
- para 19: the OECD has a project on using microdata in research (project coordinator Len Cook), and results of this work are also expected to be useful in the context of measuring globalisation;
- an issue related to the collection of data on globalisation is the administrative burden on businesses; there is strong pressure to reduce the burden and to simplify the EU Regulations; and
- international organizations have developed quite a good basis for measuring globalisation; countries need to invest the resources to implement the proposed methods.

6. The Bureau discussed the next steps in developing statistics on globalisation. The following possible areas of work on globalisation were mentioned:

- coordinating surveys on globalisation, in a way similar to how the IMF coordinates the portfolio investment survey and FATS, and OECD coordinates the Research and Development expenditures by foreign affiliates;
- defining and collecting data on head offices;
- defining and measuring off-shoring; and
- interpretation of customs data (trade that does not show up in customs data but should, or does show but should not, because ownership has not changed).

7. The Rapporteur Report will be updated taking note of the comments by the Bureau (**action: Statistics Canada and ONS, UK**).

**(c) Justice and crime statistics, including the safety concept**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/4a (Italy) and ECE/CES/BUR/2006/4b (Netherlands);

8. The Bureau discussed the issue based on two Rapporteur Reports: prepared by Italy and the Netherlands. The following comments were made in the discussion:

*Victimisation surveys*

- it is important to have a common framework of victimisation surveys to make the results internationally comparable. Administrative and survey data are very different. Also, the national and international victimisation surveys are different and often not comparable;
- harmonisation of victimisation surveys is necessary; improvements in this area can be made in a comparatively short time;
- the UNECE Task Force on victimisation surveys has prepared an inventory of methods used in victimisation surveys in countries (both within and outside official statistics), and there is a plan

to develop a manual or guidelines. The first draft of this material is planned to be ready within a year;

- a recommendation was made to focus on developing national victimisation surveys instead of the international one; and
- the work of Eurostat's Task Force on Victimisation Surveys needs to be better reflected in the papers.

#### *Crime and justice statistics*

- there is a strong demand in countries for crime statistics and statisticians need to respond to the demand;
- improvement of justice statistics is a long-term objective; progress cannot be made quickly because of the different judicial and administrative systems in countries;
- coordination of exchange of experience between countries is needed;
- the lack of continuity in setting priorities in countries between statistical areas can have a negative effect on the work on crime statistics as it does not allow resources to be committed on a continuous basis;
- there is a need to compile statistics on the expenditure on judicial systems, e.g., in the Netherlands there are attempts to prepare satellite accounts covering all costs related to crime and the judicial system;
- the possibility of efficiently measuring so-called "new crime" (e.g., money laundering, cyber-crime, trafficking, etc.) was questioned, and it was recommended to focus instead on improving comparability of statistics on more traditional forms of crime; and
- it is important to be cautious in comparing crime data between countries and to focus on those areas of crime where reliable comparisons can be made.

#### *The 'Safety' concept*

- there is no common understanding of safety; in some countries it can be an umbrella for everything dealing with crime, justice, etc.; and
- the 'safety' concept may be an emerging issue in statistics, especially concerning subjective measures of feeling safe; official statistics could deal with this topic instead of leaving it to opinion surveys.

9. The Rapporteur Reports will be updated to take note of the comments by the Bureau (**action by Italy and the Netherlands**). **The Bureau selected crime statistics as the topic for the in-depth review at the 2006 plenary session of the Conference (action by UNECE).**

#### **(d) Health statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/5a (USA) and ECE/CES/BUR/2006/5b (OECD);

10. The Bureau discussed health statistics based on Rapporteur Reports prepared by the United States and OECD. The Bureau welcomed the launch of the first joint OECD-Eurostat-WHO Health Accounts data collection in December 2005, and supported continued strong international co-operation to monitor progress in System of Health Accounts (SHA) data collection and identify issues that need to be addressed to promote further harmonisation of health accounting practices across countries. It noted the need to ensure, at the national level, that there is sufficient commitment to implement the SHA.

11. A possible timing problem was raised between the CES Task Force on Measurement of Health Status (the so-called Budapest initiative) and the Eurostat Regulation on health status measurement that the EU Statistical Programme Committee (SPC) is planning to approve in May. There is a danger that incomparability may be introduced if the new European standard precludes the development of a global standard. Eurostat promised to check the situation and to inform the Bureau (**action: Eurostat**).

12. Other comments made in the discussion were:

- proposal to endorse the suggestion made in the report by the United States to assign the Budapest initiative with the task of developing a common core set of questions on health status measurement. In this work, the Budapest initiative will make use of the results of Eurostat's testing of a limited number of core questions; and
- OECD will discuss a quality review of its annual collection of health statistics at its Statistical Committee meeting in June. The discussion at the OECD Statistical Committee will focus on the implementation of the System of Health Accounts and other efforts to improve the comparability of data on the inputs, outputs and outcomes of health systems (working in collaboration with other international organisations), not on the measurement of health status which is covered by the Budapest initiative. The OECD will also continue to use its annual meetings of Health Accounts Experts and OECD Health Data National Correspondents in the Fall to discuss progress and specific issues and actions required to improve data on health systems.

13. The Rapporteur Reports will be updated taking note of the Bureau comments (**action: United States and OECD**).

## **II. TECHNICAL COOPERATION**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/6 (UNECE secretariat)

14. The Bureau discussed the coordination of technical cooperation in the UNECE region based on a revised paper prepared by the UNECE secretariat. The paper reflects the discussion at the 2005 October Bureau meeting and has been agreed upon by Eurostat and the CIS Statistical Committee.

15. The following comments were made:

- the coordination of technical cooperation in the UNECE region should be in line with the recommendations of the CCSA; and
- Paris21 is collecting information on technical cooperation activities in African countries; it would be useful to look at their questionnaire to have comparable information.

16. The Bureau approved the proposals made in the paper subject to the comments above.

## **III. MEETING WITH MR. BELKA, THE NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE, AND AMBASSADOR ROUX (BELGIUM), CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

17. The CES Bureau met with Mr. Belka, the new Executive Secretary of the UNECE, and Ambassador Roux, the Chairman of the Economic Commission for Europe.

18. Katherine Wallman explained the role of the Conference and its Bureau. Mr. Belka appreciated the scope and geographical coverage of the Conference and the active participation of OECD and Eurostat in its work, indicating that these are good proofs of the usefulness of this body. Mr. Belka stressed that this forum of dialogue is an important part of the UNECE work. Ambassador Roux highlighted the importance of good communication between the technical work of the ECE and the policy people, and the positive effect that the changes in the ECE governance structure are expected to have in this area.

19. The Bureau underlined that the CES and UNECE Statistical Division as its secretariat are filling an important bridging role towards the non-EU countries and other UN organizations. The Bureau members stressed the good cooperation between the UNECE Statistical Division, Eurostat, OECD, and other international organizations in the UNECE region.

20. The role and use of statistics in policy making was mentioned. Ambassador Roux noted that the ECE has a direct contact with member states via the UNECE Executive Committee and should use this channel to communicate with policy makers.

#### **IV. REVIEW OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNECE REGION**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/7 (UNECE Secretariat)

21. The discussion was based on a paper prepared by the UNECE secretariat. The paper covers issues and problems in those statistical areas from the Database of International Statistical Activities (formerly called Integrated Presentation; DISA/IP) for which the required expertise is available in the UNECE secretariat.

22. The Bureau commented on the text and made suggestions for filling in the gaps in those areas where no expertise is available in the UNECE. The comments on the text will be taken into account in the updated version of the paper.

23. The following decisions were taken concerning the areas not covered by the UNECE Statistical Division:

- 2.4.2 Energy statistics – UNECE should use the report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) meeting (Jean-Yves Garnier) and look at the in-depth review by the UNSC;
- 2.3 (business statistics), 2.5 (government finance, fiscal and public sector), 2.6 (international trade and balance of payments) – Eurostat to provide text;
- 2.4.4 (transport statistics) – European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) to provide text;
- 3.2 (regional and small area statistics) – Eurostat to provide text;
- 4.2 (classifications) – UNSD to provide text;
- 4.3.3 (household surveys) – World Bank to provide text;
- 4.3.4 (Business and agricultural surveys) – Eurostat to provide text;
- 4.7 (data analysis) – Eurostat to provide text on seasonal adjustment.

24. The CIS Statistical Committee will send remarks in written form (**action: CIS Statistical Committee**).

25. The aim of the document is to help the Bureau to take informed decisions concerning issues and problems in international statistical work and to select the topics for in-depth review for the February Bureau meetings. It will be a living document that is updated on a continuous basis. A short explanation will be included in the beginning of the paper about its aim.

26. The paper will be updated to take into account the specific comments on individual statistical areas and to complete it with information available from Rapporteur Reports from previous years (**action: UNECE Secretariat**). The identified organisations will be asked to fill in the gaps (**action: Eurostat, UNSD, World Bank, ECMT, IEA**). The updated version will be circulated to the Bureau members for comments before the next Bureau meeting in October 2006.

## V. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2006 PLENARY SESSION AND THE TWO SEMINARS

### (a) Preparation of the formal session on the first day: selection of the topic for in-depth discussion based on the Rapporteurs' reports.

27. **Crime statistics** was selected as the topic for in-depth review at the CES plenary session in June.

### (b) Draft agenda and timetable for the 2006 plenary session

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/8 (UNECE secretariat).

28. OECD informed the Bureau that the plenary session of the Conference will take place in the UICP building (L'Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer-Patrimoine) in Paris. The Bureau agreed with the proposed timetable. The UNECE secretariat will check with OECD the rules for interpreters (concerning breaks and allowed length of sessions) before finalising the timetable (**action: UNECE secretariat**).

### (c) Organization of the first seminar session – Population censuses

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/9 (Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses)

29. The Bureau approved the draft outline for the Seminar. Australia will prepare an invited paper for session 1 on a business case for the population census. The organisers will contact OECD for the paper on the role of the census in collecting data on expatriates. The Discussant for session 3 will be Nancy McBeth from New Zealand.

### (d) Organization of the second seminar – Human Resources and Training

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/10 (Czech Republic)

30. The Czech Statistical Office presented an updated outline for the Seminar. The following was decided concerning its organization:

- the Seminar will be divided into 3 sessions;
- the first session will deal both with the topics of human resources as a main element of modern statistical offices and vocational training of employees;
- the Organiser of session 1 is Ivan Fellegi;
- there will be 3 Discussants for session 1: Jan Plovsing, Irena Krizman and Luigi Biggeri. Luigi will focus on vocational training. The other human resources issues will be divided between Jan Plovsing and Irena Krizman. It is important to have a clear division of labour among the Discussants;
- the sessions will be built up according to themes, not papers;
- Ivan Fellegi will decide on how to organise the sequence of session 1 (e.g., to have it in 3 parts - each Discussant's summary followed by general discussion; it is still to be decided when to give the floor to invited paper authors to react);
- the sessions will finish with conclusions and possible recommendations for follow-up work;
- invited papers will not be presented, but the authors will have a possibility to comment on the Discussants' summary of their papers;
- the Session Organisers will chair the individual sessions;
- the Seminar Organiser (Mr. Fischer) will introduce and conclude the whole seminar;
- it is not yet decided who will chair session 3 on statistical training at the international level (organised by Eurostat); and
- it would be interesting to have a paper addressing the issue of an optimal job description for an international statistician and how to improve the mobility of staff between national and international statistical organizations.

## VI. CONFIDENTIALITY AND MICRODATA

Documentation: ECE//CES/BUR/2006/11 and Add.1 (Dennis Trewin)

31. Dennis Trewin, the Chairman of the Task Force, presented the progress report on the work with the Guidelines for Managing Confidentiality and Microdata Access via a teleconference.

32. Mr. Trewin will make a few changes to the section dealing with international access. The following comments were made in the discussion:

- to distinguish better between the microdata release to international agencies and to individual researchers from other countries (in para 92); and
- to include a reference in the paper to the International Principles of statistical activities after their consideration by the UN Statistical Commission.

33. The Bureau decided that the document is ready to be distributed as Interim Guidelines. An introductory note will be added to the paper explaining its nature as a living document that can be updated in the future. This note should make it clear that the CES has not yet approved the document (**action:Dennis Trewin**).

34. The Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to undertake the final editing and formatting of the paper. The Guidelines will be posted on the website as Interim Guidelines pending their approval as final Guidelines by the CES Plenary session (**action: UNECE secretariat**). Countries will be able to send their final comments to the UNECE secretariat until 19 May.

## VII. ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/12 (Eurostat)

35. The Bureau discussed environment statistics based on a paper prepared by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (IWG-ENV). The following comments were made in the discussion:

- the paper should also mention greenhouse gas statistics; these are entirely in the hands of environment ministries;
- some de facto standards exist in the area of environment statistics; it would be important to synthesise these into a manual or guidelines on good practice for official statistics in specific areas of environment statistics; however, the situation may not be mature yet for developing overall guidelines for environment statistics, new ideas might still come up within the next 2-3 years;
- the OECD quality standards adopted by the Environment Committee should be brought to the attention of the Working Group; and
- cooperation is good between Eurostat and the European Environment Agency, this reduces the burden on statistical offices.

## VIII. PROCEDURES FOR ADOPTING STANDARDS BY THE CONFERENCE AND ITS BUREAU

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/13 (UNECE secretariat)

36. The Bureau discussed a formal procedure for adoption of the various products (handbooks, guidelines, best practices, recommendations and standards) based on a paper prepared by the UNECE secretariat. It was decided to use two categories of products: those that need adoption/endorsement by the Conference and those that are the responsibility of the relevant Teams of Specialists. All documents that are to be endorsed by the Conference will be submitted to the Conference on the recommendation of the Bureau.

37. The Bureau approved the procedure subject to comments above (**action: UNECE secretariat**).

38. The Handbook “Rural Households Livelihood and Well-Being” was endorsed by the Bureau.

#### **IX. PROPOSAL FOR THE REVIEW OF THE UNECE MACROECONOMIC DATABASE**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/14 (UNECE secretariat)

39. Following the UNECE External Evaluation Report, the UNECE secretariat will undertake an external assessment of the macroeconomic database and gender database in 2006. The Bureau discussed the proposal for the assessment.

40. The following comments were made in the discussion:

- the review should focus on the users and the value added of the UNECE statistical databases in comparison to the databases maintained by Eurostat, OECD and UNSD;
- the review should also look at how the data collection and dissemination process fits with the potential of SDMX; and
- UNECE collects data directly from the member states; therefore, there might be differences with data maintained by the CIS Statistical Committee, which may confuse users; CIS will provide comments on evaluation of data (**action: CIS Statistical Committee**).

41. The Netherlands, the United States and the World Bank have expressed interest in participating in the review of the gender database. The Bureau members are welcome to propose other experts to carry out the evaluation (**action: Bureau**). The UNECE Statistical Division will also look for additional experts (**action: UNECE secretariat**).

#### **X. PROPOSAL FOR ENDORSEMENT OF THE OFFICIAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES BY THE CONFERENCE AND UNECE**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/15 (UNECE secretariat)

42. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) reached consensus at its last meeting on 12-14 September 2005, on a set of “Principles Governing International Statistical Activities”. The chief statisticians of 22 international organizations, including UNECE, have expressed their willingness to adhere to this new set of principles. The Bureau welcomed the initiative.

43. The Principles are expected to be considered by the UN Statistical Commission at its meeting on 7-10 March 2006. Therefore, endorsement by CES was not considered necessary.

44. Since the Principles are a product of the CCSA, the Bureau decided to prepare a resolution to be adopted by the CES (and later by UNECE) to ensure adherence to these principles in all statistical activities of the UNECE (**action: UNECE**).

#### **XI. PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE CES TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS**

##### **(a) Electronic Data Reporting**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/16 (Task Force on EDR)

45. The Bureau approved the work plan for the Task Force on Electronic Data Reporting. The Bureau stressed that this is an important area where good practices should be developed. It was recommended to find synergies with other international activities where related issues are considered to coordinate the work, avoid overlaps, and make this initiative a success.

**(b) Sustainable development**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/17 (Task Force on Sustainable Development)

46. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Steering Committee on Sustainable Development and the work plan for the UNECE-OECD-Eurostat Working Group on Sustainable Development. The Working Group will report both to the CES and the OECD Committee on Statistics.

47. It was stressed that it is important to keep the process transparent and open to all UNECE and OECD member countries. At the same time, the membership of the Working Group should have some stability to be able to follow up on fulfilling the commitments. The materials prepared by the group will be posted on a website giving an opportunity for all countries to comment.

48. The Bureau acknowledged the substantial contribution of Norway in making available an expert who will work at the OECD on this issue.

49. Attention was drawn to the need to take into account the timetable of the CES and its Bureau in planning the preparation of the reports so that they can be considered at the respective meetings of the CES and its Bureau. Lidia will communicate her suggestions on timing to Robert Smith (**action: UNECE Secretariat**).

**(c) Migration statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/18 (Task Force on Migration Statistics)

50. The Bureau was informed about the progress of work with regard to the implementation of the Work plan on migration statistics and the Task Force. The Bureau welcomed the progress made and acknowledged that there is considerable interest in this work.

**(d) Quality of work**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/20 (Task Force on Measurement of Quality of work)

51. The Bureau approved the Terms of Reference for the Task Force and welcomed the ILO leadership in this project. The Task Force has seven members so far (countries and international organisations); other countries and organizations are welcome to join the group.

**XII. INFORMATION ITEMS****(a) Follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/19 (UNECE secretariat)

52. The note was presented for information. Concerning culture statistics, Eurostat is still considering the organisation of a meeting. OECD has an activity on statistical measurement of the economic importance of culture and art-related activities.

53. The UNECE presented a short note following up on the Bureau decision concerning Purchasing Power Parities for the CIS countries.

54. The Bureau decided to ask **UNSD to report about its statistical activities at the 2006 October Bureau meeting (action: UNSD)**. A backup possibility is OECD.

**(b) Preparation of the 2006 version of the Database of International Statistical Activities (formerly called Integrated Presentation)**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/19 (UNECE secretariat)

55. The UNECE secretariat informed the Bureau about releasing the 2006 version of the database and the availability of the remote updating facility.

**XIII. DATES AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BUREAU MEETINGS**

56. The CES Plenary session will take place from 13 June (afternoon) to 15 June in Paris. Organisation of a lunch or dinner meeting of the Bureau is planned. The next CES Bureau meeting will take place on **19-20 October 2006 in Washington, D.C.**

#### **XIV ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

57. The Bureau decided to co-opt Aija Zigure, the President of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, as a new member of the Bureau.

58. The Bureau discussed the policy of posting its documents on the web. It was agreed that, as a general rule, the documents will be posted on the web after the Bureau meeting, unless the Bureau decides to restrict the dissemination of a specific document.

59. The following documents will be made available on Internet:

- from the October 2005 Bureau meeting: papers no. 2, 2 Add.1, 4,5, 11,12,13, 13 Add.1, 14,15,16,17, 18, 19, 20;
- from the February 2006 Bureau meeting: papers no. 1, 1 Add.1, 6, 14, 16, 17, 17 Add.1, 18, 19, 20, 21; papers no. 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 11, 12 will be made public after revision.

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