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(Paris, 10-12 June 2002)

**REPORT OF THE NOVEMBER 2001 JOINT ECE/Eurostat/OECD CONSULTATION
ON THE EUROPEAN COMPARISON PROGRAMME**

Note prepared by the Secretariat

1. The meeting was held from 12 to 14 November 2001 in Geneva (Switzerland). It was attended by participants from Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Yugoslavia. Representatives of the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) also attended the Consultation. Australia and New Zealand were present under article 11 of the terms of reference of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The World Bank was also represented.

2. The meeting was opened by Lidia Bratanova, ECE Statistical Division.

3. The provisional agenda was adopted.

4. Mr. David Baran (United Kingdom) was elected the Chairman.

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ORGANIZATION OF THE CONSULTATION

5. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting on the basis of submitted papers and presentations:

- (i) Current status of the ECP and ICP;
- (ii) ECP 1999:
 - Calculation of the 1999 results
 - Review of the 1999 results
 - Publication of the 1999 results;
- (iii) ECP 2000:
 - Completion of the 2000 round - country coverage, calculation and publication of results
- (iv) Recent methodological developments:
 - The revised classification of expenditure on GDP and the treatment of non-market services
 - Treatment of housing
 - The treatment of construction in OECD and CIS comparisons
 - Progress in the use of scanner data
 - Comparability of GDP volume series and GDP series based on PPPs.

6. The discussion was based on papers and presentations by Austria, Russian Federation, CIS Statistical Committee, Eurostat, OECD, World Bank and the ECE Secretariat.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE MEETING

7. Recommendations for future work are given below. Other conclusions that the participants reached at the meeting on the above topics are presented in a separate report prepared after the meeting. It is distributed to participants and, on request, to other interested persons.

RECOMMENDED FUTURE WORK

Publication of 1999 ECP and 2000 ECP results

8. The meeting agreed that the ECE secretariat should assume responsibility for the publication of the overall ECP results covering all countries in the ECE region, in co-ordination with the other international organisations.

9. It was also agreed that publications by the three organisations involved should present the results at the same level of detail.

10. More specifically, the meeting recommended that the OECD should prepare and publish the report on the 1999 comparison and the ECE secretariat should prepare and publish the report on the 2000 comparison. The 2000 ECP report should cover the CIS countries and Mongolia which have undertaken a comparison with data for 2000.

11. The meeting also recommended that the ECE secretariat should post the 1999 ECP results on its internet site with the Euro as numeraire and the EU 15 as reference country as the OECD will present the 1999 results with the US dollar as numeraire and OECD 30 as reference country. Eurostat will consider to publish the 1999 results in electronic format only.

12. The meeting proposed that the ECE report on the 2000 comparison should publish the results for the 31 countries participating in the Eurostat comparison for 2000 and the twelve countries participating in the CIS comparison. The Russian Federation will provide the bridge between the two groups of countries. The report may also include results for eleven countries that participated in the 1999 comparison but are not participating in the 2000 comparison (seven non-European OECD countries, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel and Ukraine). The inclusion of the countries will depend on how reliably their results for 1999 could be extrapolated to 2000. Alternatively the eleven countries would be covered in the report at the level of GDP only.

13. The meeting proposed that the UNECE should present the results according to 23 analytical categories. The same level of detail is being used in the OECD report of the 1999 comparison. Eurostat will consider adopting the same set of analytical categories for the PPPs it publishes for a wider circle of users.

Future consultations

14. The meeting agreed that future consultations were highly desirable. The consultations are of particular importance for co-ordination of the work between the Secretariats of ECE, Eurostat, OECD, CIS Statistical Committee and the State Committee on Statistics of the Russian Federation (co-coordinators of the CIS comparison). They are also of interest to all countries that are members of the ECE.

15. The meeting recommended that a joint Consultation with all the international and national statistical offices involved in the 2000 comparisons should be organised in December 2002 in Geneva. The Consultation will review the provisional 2000 ECP results and their publication.

Future work

16. The meeting agreed that the next benchmark round of comparisons for the ECE region should be with data for 2002. Countries participating in the Eurostat/OECD PPP Programme have already started the 2002 comparison. In this context, the meeting recommended that the CIS Statistical Committee and the Russian Goskomstat consider the possibility to undertake a

comparison of the CIS countries and Mongolia with data for 2002 provided some financial support is received from the World Bank. At present the CIS-STAT and Russian Goskomstat are planning to undertake comparison with 2003 data.

17. The meeting recommended that the following text be included in the programme of work of the Conference of European Statisticians:

- (a) ECE should assume responsibility for the publication of the overall 2000 ECP results and publish them soon after Eurostat, OECD, the CIS Statistical Committee and the State Committee on Statistics of the Russian Federation finalise the results for the countries co-ordinated by them.
- (b) A joint Consultation with all the international and national statistical offices involved in the calculation of the 2000 results should be organised in December 2002 in Geneva.
