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ADAPTATION OF POTENTIAL NEW MEMBER COUNTRIES TO THE EU SYSTEM
THE POINT OF VIEW OF EU

Invited paper submitted by the Statistical Office
of the European Communities*

I. Introduction

Agriculture has traditionally been and is still one of the most important sectors in most Accession Countries. Agricultural area, contribution to the GDP and employment in agriculture are bigger than in the EU. Thus, the accession of the countries currently applied for EU Membership will increase the importance of agriculture in the EU enlarged. The production potential will grow and the developments in the structures and in the rural area require a new orientation of the CAP. Against this background, the importance is to obtain a well developed agricultural statistical system that serves as an information source for the development and the management of the CAP which still represent 50% of EC total budget.

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II. EU enlargement objectives on statistics

(a) Developing the appropriate statistical infrastructure (institution building):

- Need of reforming the official institutions away from the centralised structure towards locally based statistical units = reinforcement of administrative and technical capacity aimed to developing structures, human resources and management skills.
- Move from the previous accounting system to the survey system of official statistics.
- Farm registers have to be built up - although structural changes and the land reform with its often unknown ownership rights can make this difficult

(b) Investment in the acquis communautaire :

The EU statistical requirements on agricultural statistics to be adopted by the Accession Countries consist of 3 main elements:

- Community legislation (60 % of the acquis communautaire).
- Gentlemen agreements (40 % of the acquis communautaire) = important domains as agromonetary statistics, supply balance sheets, land use, agromet system.
- "Technical" documentation as methodologies, handbooks and reports from Member States, workshops, etc...

EC agricultural statistics is a moving target and the details of present requirements are changing. It is still useful, however, for Accession Countries to develop their agricultural statistics to meet the EC present requirements, since:

- the EC requirements are at least the starting point for tomorrow's needs;
- they are a comprehensive set which fits into the world system;
- the data for accession negotiations will be based on the EC system (comparison with existing Community figures).

III. EU policy framework: the preaccession strategy

Accession Partnerships

The new framework of the preaccession strategy has been adopted in the Council Regulation no 622/98 of 16 March 1998. Key feature is the Accession Partnerships that will mobilise all forms of technical and financial assistance to the accession countries in a single framework. This framework covers in detail the priorities to be observed. In the first Accession Partnerships released in 1998, agriculture is identified as priority, but statistics is mentioned only in few cases. Although it is obvious that good statistics are essential for monitoring the CAP and other Community policies, there are some risks of not getting statistical assistance programmes approved when statistics is not formally included in the Accession Partnerships. Therefore Eurostat has proposed to take "statistics" into account in the revised Accession Partnerships to be addressed during year 2000.

The Accession Partnerships are complemented by the National Programmes for the Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA) which give details on each country's commitments with regard to achieving the criteria adopted at the Copenhagen European Council 1993 (achieving stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection minorities, functioning market economy, ability to take the obligations of membership) and meeting the requirements of the acquis communautaire. NPAA for statistics have been prepared by the statistical authorities of the countries in 1998. They are accompanied by annual programs and quarterly plans being the base for all technical assistance provided. It is also supposed to revise the NPAA along with the new Accession Partnerships.

Phare programming

The channel for EU's financial and technical support to the Accession Countries since 1997 have been Phare. Phare programming of statistical co-operation is subdivided into

- National Phare programmes and
- Multi-beneficiary (=multi-country) programmes, which represent about one third of the total amount allocated.

Whereas national programmes concentrate mainly on the improvement of the statistical infrastructure including the provision of state-of-the-art hardware, multi-beneficiary programmes focus on the provision of comparable, timely and relevant statistics in certain priority areas as well as the transfer of know-how concerning the statistical requirements of EU membership.

- Phare National Statistics Programmes are presented mainly on the initiative of the Accession Countries' administrations. They are part of larger annual Country Programmes, which are implemented on the basis of a Financing Memorandum between the Commission and the Government of the Accession Countries.

From the point of view of statistics the main strength of these National Programmes is that they open the possibility to direct relatively large amounts of resources to areas where the Accession Countries needs specific assistance. In addition most of these tailor-made programmes are far too costly to be covered by a multi-country programme.

The main weakness of National Statistics Programmes is that they have to compete with programmes presented by other authorities, which also claim a fair share within the total amount of the annual Country Programme. In the past Accession Countries' NSOs often had difficulties to find the support within their Governments which is necessary to get adequate statistics programmes approved.

In the area of agricultural statistics joint preparation and co-ordinated lobbying of NSOs and Ministries of Agriculture will be crucial during the preparatory phase of annual Country Programmes. In addition, the European Commission, and more specifically Eurostat, should be involved during the preparation of National Statistics Programmes at a sufficiently early stage with a view to avoiding problems during the EU decision making process which begins after the formal presentation of the annual Country Programme.

- Phare multi-beneficiary Statistics Programmes

The Commission has overall management responsibility. Management authority is subdelegated to Eurostat, who is responsible for the award of contracts, acting as Contracting Authority on behalf of the Partner Countries. A Policy Group, consisting of top management representatives of Accession Countries' NSOs, acts as the Programme's supervisory board. It will be assisted by a Management Group of representatives from Accession Countries' and Member States' NSOs. A special Programme Secretariat will provide permanent co-ordinating and monitoring functions and also commission sectoral studies. In addition a contractor has been appointed through normal Phare procedures to implement the proposed projects and manage the technical assistance facility.

Over the period 1991 to 1997 a total of 35.5 M has been allocated to multi-beneficiary programmes in statistics. For 1998 an allocation of 5 M was approved recently, and for 1999 an amount of 15 M was provisionally earmarked for this purpose. There is no breakdown of resources by Accession Countries. Instead, the multi-country budget is subdivided by different types of actions.

From year 2000 up to the countries' date of accession, two additional Commission instruments so-called ISPA ("Pre-accession instrument for structural policies") and SAPARD ("Special Accession programme for Agriculture and rural Development") have been proposed. The conditional requirement would remain, i.e. that financial assistance would only be given as far as the accession countries respected its commitments under the Europe Agreement, took steps towards satisfying the Copenhagen criteria and made progress in implementing the Accession Partnership.

After accession, once candidates will have joined the EU, they will become eligible for Community assistance, notably from the structural funds. Ad hoc restructuring plans can be implemented to ensure the development of an adequate technical infrastructure at central and regional level in each Accession Country.

(c) EU screening exercise

The screening exercise is based on a Council Decision requiring the Commission to submit to it an annual progress report on the adoption of the legal acquis communautaire, in each country which has applied for accession to the European Union. The first Commission report to the Council was prepared in 1998 and serves as the basis for the accession negotiations. Yearly reports will follow. The purpose is to enable the Commission to judge on the level of adoption of the acquis communautaire in the different domains.

The first screening on agricultural statistics took place in 1998 under the chapter "statistics" -chaired by DGIA and under the chapter "agriculture"- chaired by DGVI. The target was to combine the statements both by Eurostat and by each Accession Country about the level of the adoption of the legal acquis communautaire on the different statistical domains. Gentleman's agreements are not included in the screening exercise. It can be summed up that the structural and agromonetary domains are less advanced than production statistics. These latter data are mainly available in the data scope required by Eurostat. But their quality is not yet verified. There are of course differences in the level of adoption among the accession countries. The outcome of the screening exercise is the political basis for the decisions to provide technical assistance.

IV. Eurostat's support on agricultural statistics

(a) Documentation of the acquis communautaire

Three kinds of documentation have been prepared:

- Eurostat's Statistical requirement compendium containing a short description of each statistical module (gentleman's agreements
- Compilation of all legal acts on agricultural statistics = pink book"
- Consolidated legal acts on agricultural statistics.

In addition, all Community methodological documentation has also been provided.

Two manuals (handbooks) on "Economic accounts on agriculture" and "Agricultural price statistics" are being translated into the 10 "new" languages of the accession countries. This together should first provide the base for the compliance work.

(b) Data flow

A regular flow of agricultural production data from Accession Countries to Eurostat takes place. Data has been included into Eurostat's database New Cronos under a separate subdomain "ZPA1-CC". As soon as data on structure and monetary statistics become available, the appropriate entrance into New Cronos will be prepared.

(c) Pilot projects

The first agricultural pilot project on "agromonetary statistics" (Phare multi-beneficiary program 1998) has started in 1999. It comprises 4 subprojects on economic accounts of agriculture, agricultural price statistics, agricultural labour input statistics and the SPEL model. A first extraordinary Working Group was held on 8 February 1999 for the accession countries.

5 other pilot projects on agricultural statistics have been proposed this year. Topics are:

- Preparation of farm structure survey incl. farm register;
- Supply balance sheets;
- Land use (incl. area frame sampling in 6 countries);
- Fishery employment statistics;
- Income of agricultural household sector.

Those which are accepted by the Phare Management Group and the Policy Group will be eligible for funding from the Phare 1999 multi-beneficiary program.

(d) Technical assistance

A first special Agricultural Statistics Committee (ASC) on enlargement and technical assistance was held in October 1998 with the participation of EU-Member States and Accession Countries. It provided transparency, clarified the political framework of co-operation, pointed out the statistical needs of Accession Countries and developed ideas for future technical assistance programs on the base of bilateral partnerships. The needs could be broken down in concrete short-term and long-term objectives.

Short-term:

- Organisation of 10 special workshops for accession Countries per statistical domain in 1999. They are organised back-to-back to the regular Working groups and aim at focussing financial and human resources on specific days for all countries together by avoiding different short visits on specific issues from each of the 11 Accession Countries to Eurostat. The results will help to include step by step topic related work with Accession Countries into the daily work with EU-Member States and also to elaborate some statements for the next screening exercise.

Long-term:

- Pilot projects (see above).
- Bilateral partnerships and elaborating technical assistance programs on agricultural statistics between EU-Member States and Accession Countries. They are more practice oriented compared to Eurostat' activities.
- Training human resources (stagiaires).
- Institution building.

(e) Organisational network

All technical assistance towards Accession Countries must be co-ordinated in an efficient and non overlapping way. This concerns numerous bodies: Eurostat, EU-Member States and institutions in Accession Countries and international organisations.

A resolution of the Agricultural Statistics Committee (ASC) on 7 July 1998 in Helsinki on "Basic principles on the Co-operation with accession countries on agriculture, fisheries and rural development" has been distributed to the authorities in Accession Countries. It helps also very much within the Commission to steer the decision process on technical assistance programs on agricultural statistics towards the ASC. Targets are:

- Developing statistical development programs with Accession Countries;
- Thematic co-ordination: Building up an efficient and flexible organisation structure;
- Financial contributions to major statistics operations should be made through funds earmarked for agriculture.

A triangle information network between Eurostat- F (11 Internal Country Officers = ICO, one for each country) -EU-Member State - Accession Countries is also in place. Each ICO within Eurostat-F has the task to follow the developments and to be the contact partner in "his" country, to know the Commission policy and help to co-ordinate the assistance work addressed to his country.

International organisation is guaranteed by the regular meetings of the Intersecretariat Working Group on agricultural statistics (IWG.AGRI). This body (FAO, UNECE, OECD, Eurostat) has co-ordinated the organisation of a series of annual seminars in Eastern European (and also CIS) Countries covering themes such as Farm Structure Surveys, registers of farms and agro-monetary statistics.

In addition, an implementation organ so called LANDSIS-EEIG for executing statistical programs mainly on agriculture, rural development and environment has been created on the initiative of statistical authorities of some Member States. It has been in place since 1998. The fact that statistical services of EU Member States have taken the initiative for such an implementation organ aims to ensure the quality of the basic statistical work. The overall consistency of the statistical authorities in line with the EU data requirements is guaranteed by the co-ordination and steering of the ASC.
