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**PROGRAMMES FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS (CES) – HISTORICAL PART**

Prepared by Carlo Malaguerra

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the CES the Bureau decided to publish a booklet on the history of this subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Europe. The publication should give an overview of the main features which marked the development of the CES during its 50 years of existence. It will consist of a succession of articles written by different authors chosen for their expertise on the subject. The publication will appear under the auspices of the CES; the Bureau of the CES will review the chapters but the authors alone will be responsible for their opinions.

Carlo Malaguerra will take the responsibility as editor of the publication.

The publication should in principle be available in the three official languages of the CES. A final decision in this respect is to be taken as soon as the financial support will be assured.

I. Introduction – Presentation

1. The introduction should first represent a sort of synthesis of the main developments and achievements of the CES during its 50 years of existence. Secondly, it should summarise very briefly the different articles, organised by chapters, written by the experts. Thirdly, it should give an outline of the challenges which the CES will be facing in the coming years.

**II. The beginnings of the international concertation on statistical matters.
By Tom Griffin**

2. The need of comparable international statistics was a necessity already at the beginning of official statistics. The ISI (International Statistical Institute) was effectively created to ensure comparability, among other things, through the definition of standards, classifications, nomenclatures etc. During the

period of the “Société des Nations”, statisticians felt the need to come together in the aim to improve comparability of national statistics among countries. In this article the author will try to present these first attempts of harmonisation of official statistics and will try to answer two questions: (i) if this period can be seen as the pioneer work which prepared the future developments – in the world and, notably, in the ECE region; and (ii) what lessons, if any, can we draw from the League of Nations.

III. The birth of the Conference of European Statisticians in the European and world context **By Wilhem de Vries**

3. The end of World War Two marked the beginning of a great international commitment in view of the creation of the United Nations Organisation (in its broadest meaning, i.e. including the Bretton Woods institutions). With the central heading in New York, four Regional Commissions were created so that the very different regional dimensions and realities of our world were better taken into account. In Europe, beside the creation of the ECE, several other initiatives took place pursuing a consolidation of the international co-operation and co-ordination. With the implementation of the Marshall Plan the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC, later OECD) was created in Paris. On the other side, 6 European countries (D, F, I, BE, L and NL) signed an agreement on the creation of the European Community for Coal and Steel (also called MONTAUNION), the first supranational authority in the world and predecessor of the European Community, respectively of the European Union. In the Eastern part of Europe, almost as pendant to the OEEC, the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) was set into force. Between the end of the war until the beginning of the fifties we can observe in Europe an intensive series of effort to improve both the co-operation and the co-ordination of national activities.

4. The need for comparable statistical information grew with the development of economic activities in the area and the development of the role of international, respectively, supranational organisations. Statisticians felt the necessity to better co-ordinate their activities, to have standardised tools and methods. The CES was born in this context of efforts toward international comparability of statistical information. The author will try to analyse if the development model in Europe was unique or if it was an overall world effort of the Regional Commissions to ensure the production of better statistical data. Further, the author will point out the role of the CES in the context of the European organisations and institutions (conflicts in competencies, subsidiaries, etc.). It will be of interest to know how western and eastern countries did approach the implementation of such an institution as the CES.

IV. The development and the achievements of the CES until the nineties: the point of view of Eastern Europe **By Youri Ivanov and Mikhail Korolev**

5. For almost 40 years the CES was the meeting point of official statisticians representing two categories of countries: the communist countries and the western countries. Despite the deep differences characterising the two society models and, as a consequence, the different approach in measuring social phenomena, statisticians have regularly met in Geneva. They discussed and approved classifications and nomenclatures, they exchanged data, they achieved common studies in relation to international comparability, especially of macroeconomic aggregates, etc. The authors will stress the relations between Eastern countries and the CES and between other member countries. What did the CES represent for the former communist countries? What did the CES allow to (better) achieve the goals of official statistics in these countries? Was the concept of official statistics in this period a clear and unique one? What were, if

any, the differences between the scope and use of statistics in the former communist countries in respect of the western ones? Has the atmosphere of the cold war had far-reaching consequences on the production of statistical information? How have the statistical systems of the former communist countries developed during this period? The authors will try to answer these questions and give their opinion on the whole period under analysis.

V. The development and achievements of the CES until the nineties: the point of view of western countries

By Edmond Malinvaud

6. Mutatis mutandi, the description made for chapter 4 should be valid for the analysis of chapter 5. The study of this period from two different points of view will probably lead to a divergence in the evaluation. The aim of this booklet is not to have an "official" interpretation of the history: it is much more important to have opinions founded on a serious analysis of the historical period. In a certain sense divergent opinions can be much more constructive for the understanding of what happened in past times.

VI. From the planned to the market economy: the role of the CES in the transition period

By Josef Olenski

7. The last decade will pass as one of the most amazing periods in recent human history. The fall of the Berlin Wall has not just lead to a deep change in the former communist countries but to an overall change of world society. It is still too early to evaluate the span of the changes achieved and in the process of being achieved. The transformation of the economy and of the society, the transition to democratic governments, the building of new countries, globalisation, etc. have affected and challenged deeply the statistical systems of many countries. The notion of "transition" period to characterise these years of change was adopted. But it would be incorrect to speak of a transition process: every country, old or new, had its own transition, according to its culture and its stage of development. Much scientific research has been done on this subject, and many articles have been published. For the moment we still don't have a synthesis of the whole process and the consequences thereof. The author will first try to make clear the notion of "transition process" and stress the national peculiarities of this process. Then he will consider the role and the achievements – and the weaknesses - of the CES in this process. This article should stress the consequences for the CES as an institution of this transition process. The changes in our society have far-reaching consequences on the international institutions. Nothing, but nothing, has remained unchanged.

VII. A special case of the transition process: the TACIS Programme and the statistical development

By Vladimir Sokolin

8. Launched by the EC in 1991, the Tacis Programme provides grant-financed technical assistance to 13 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), and mainly aims at enhancing the transition process in these countries. Official statistics is part of the programme.

9. The so called TACIS-Countries have experienced a particular transition process from the planned economy systems to the market economy. It is important to analyse the role done of the CES after 1991 for these "new" countries and to evaluate the impact the Conference has had in their statistical development.

VIII. The fundamental principles of official statistics: the breakthrough of a new era **By Jean-Louis Bodin**

10. One of the most important achievements – perhaps the most important one – of the CES was the elaboration of a Charter of 10 principles for official statistics. The initiative, taken by the Polish delegation in the early months of 1990, to set up such a fundamental code was the consequence of misuses and anomalies in the production and dissemination of official statistics in the former communist countries. The principles were adopted in 1992 by the ECE and in 1994 they became a world standard. The author will recall the difficulties encountered in elaborating these principles and the procedure which led the statistical community first and the political authorities then to adopt these principles. He will focus his analysis on the content of the principles and guide the reader in their interpretation. It will be important to stress what are the consequences for the whole statistical community, for the users of statistics and, especially, for the political authorities. He will explain why the principles have brought a paradigmatic change. He will then conclude this chapter in giving examples of how these principles have been followed by the different countries.

IX. Official statistics new reshaped: the new role of international and supranational organisations dealing with statistics

11. As stated before, the last decade brought enormous in-depth changes to our societies. The need for statistical information of good quality have grown exponentially for many reasons (globalisation, growing complexity of the society, new ICT, good governance, transparency, accountability, etc.). Comparability in space and time has gained evident importance. International organisations are asked to increasingly co-ordinate and standardise the conceptual infrastructure of national statistical activities, to develop methods and concepts, to define the right indicators, to implement best practices, to assure a minimum of statistical capacity in every country, to observe the independence and autonomy of statistical institutes, and so on. The CES has achieved a great deal in this respect. But many other organisations also deal with statistical information and with statistical systems: EUROSTAT, OECD, UNSD, IMF, UNESCO and many more.

How do these organisations work together and what relationship do they have with the CES – if any? How to consider the complexity of such a network of different organisations dealing with the same “product”? The author will try to answer these questions and give his ideas on the future development of the world statistical system – a pillar for our democratic institutions.

X. The emergence of the statistical information in a globalised world **By Paolo Garonna**

12. If we want a world in which the fundamental principles of human rights are respected, then we need democratic systems. Democracy calls for transparency and transparency calls for independent and objective statistical information. One of the most important conditions for our democratic institutions is to have in every country an authority that can guarantee the production of scientifically-based quality information. Even if in everyday practice principles are not respected, even if injustice is present, even if war, terror and violence are still the permanent condition of many people, the international community is committed to fight for the respect of human beings. Statistical information plays an evident and important role in our societies and the statistical community must be perfectly credible. How can statistics be better used for policy decisions, how can statistics better disseminate knowledge to the civil society, how can

statistics contribute to the democratic debate? The author will try to give an answer to these questions and propose new guidelines for the future of official statistics.

XI. Biographical information about the CES
By John Kelly

13. This chapter is devoted to a recall of the persons, of the institutions, of the countries which were the actors during the 50 years of life of the CES. Many of them have passed but they have legated to the new generations their works and ideas. An organisation like the CES could develop only because a large number of persons have generously contributed. Through the lists of persons and institutions it will be possible to follow the developments of the CES.