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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE PRIORITISATION OF THE STATISTICAL DIVISION'S
AND THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS' WORK PROGRAMME**

Recommendations prepared by the secretariat and endorsed by the Bureau of the Conference

Explanatory Note: This paper was reviewed in draft form by the CES Bureau at the Bureau's 4 March 2002 meeting. All ECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies are required to prepare a paper on prioritisation of work programmes along the same lines as this one for submission to the Commission's Group of Experts on the Programme of Work. The CES Bureau approved its content, and particularly the text shown in the boxes in Annex II of the note.

The Bureau recommends that the Conference approve the draft decision shown in para. 22 of this document.

I. Background

1. At its 54th session in May 1999 the Economic Commission for Europe agreed to revise the system of prioritisation that Principal Subsidiary Bodies of the ECE are required to use as a result of the outcome of the 1997 Reform of the Commission. The Commission agreed that PSBs should henceforth prioritise their activities using a proforma, in preparation for the biennial programme budget submission for the Commission. This proforma was developed by the Commission's Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW), and it is intended to allow the GEPW to compare the activities of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) on a cross-sectoral basis, with information provided by all the PSBs in a similar format.

2. The contents of this explanatory note were drawn up early in the year 2000 jointly by the GEPW and the ECE secretariat. It is intended to explain the revised system and offer guidance to the all ECE PSBs for future reference. The note also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the GEPW, the Secretariat and the PSBs in the prioritisation process; describes the individual sections of the proforma; and explains the procedure for preparing and completing the proforma.

II. Roles and responsibilities of each group

3. There are three main groups involved in the prioritisation exercise:
- a) the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW);
 - b) the ECE secretariat (including the Office of the Executive Secretary and the Divisional Directors); and
 - c) the individual PSBs (and their Bureaux).

Each group plays a specific and significant part in ensuring the effectiveness of the new system, which is designed to ensure that all three groups work together rather than individually.

a) Group of Experts on the Programme of Work

4. The GEPW was established in accordance with the ECE Plan of Action, which was adopted by the Commission at its fifty-second session in 1997. The Group's mandate is:

(i) to examine the programmes of work of the PSBs and to advise on arbitration between the competing additional demands from PSBs when they imply significant shifts among these programmes;

(ii) to advise on how to adjust the programme of work according to possible changes in orientation, to anticipated changes in the level of resources for the next biennium or, in respect of the current biennium, to unexpected changes of such a magnitude that it would have a significant impact on the existing programme of work.

5. The GEPW is responsible for ensuring that the direction of ECE work concurs with the wishes of the individual member States. The overall orientation of ECE's activities can be altered by changing, as necessary, the resource allocation to each PSB. This may follow an increase or decrease in the total budgetary allocation. It may also follow a consensus among the member States to place more or less emphasis on individual areas of activity, with no impact on the total ECE resource base.

6. The GEPW was not established to supervise or to micro-manage the work of individual PSBs. It has no remit to make arbitrary decisions on resource allocations between PSBs. Any recommendation to redistribute resources between PSBs would only be put to the Commission after having consulted the relevant Divisional Directors. The Commission would then need to formally adopt the recommendations of the GEPW. Even then, it would be for the PSBs themselves to determine how a change in the level of their resources should be most effectively applied, since the experts on each Committee are best placed to decide which activities would benefit from, or be least harmed by, a change in the PSB resource allocation.

7. In consultation with the respective PSBs through Divisional Directors and PSB Secretaries (who would in turn consult the PSB Bureaux), the GEPW will determine the clusters of activities to be prioritised for each PSB.

8. The GEPW will meet in the autumn preceding the submission of the budget narrative by the Executive Secretary. This meeting will determine, in the light of information contained in the proformas and any supplementary information submitted, whether it is necessary to recommend the allocation or redistribution of resources to or between the PSBs. The GEPW may also be convened on an ad hoc basis at the request of the Bureau of the Commission, the Chairman of the GEPW or the Executive Secretary. Individual member States may also formally request the Bureau or the Chairman of the GEPW to convene a meeting of the Group to discuss any other issues relevant to the mandate of the GEPW.

b) The ECE secretariat

9. Divisional Directors and PSB Secretaries will be consulted on the clusters of activity to be prioritised on the proforma, which will be based on the structure of the programme of work established by the PSB. Divisional Directors will also be responsible for overseeing the prioritisation exercise in the PSBs for which they are responsible.

10. The Office of the Executive Secretary will supervise the prioritisation exercise as a whole. It will also collate the completed proformas (with supplementary information if submitted) for consideration by the GEPW. It will advise the GEPW on budgetary and administrative matters in ECE that are relevant to the work of the GEPW, and it will convene and attend meetings between the GEPW and other parties (Bureaux of PSBs, Divisional Directors, PSB Chairpersons) as necessary.

c) PSBs and their Bureaux

11. The PSB Bureaux should aim to present the PSB with a draft completed proforma for discussion and agreement at its annual session. It may request an informal meeting with the Chairman or a representative of the GEPW if any further clarification is required.

12. The PSBs should ensure that the completed proforma meets the requirements of the GEPW. In addition, it may submit any supplementary information that the PSB wishes to draw to the attention of the GEPW.

III. The proforma

13. An example of a blank proforma is shown in Annex I. It consists of two main sections: a prioritisation table listing the clusters (or main subject areas) of activity for each PSB; and two boxes relating to the impact of a change in the level of staff resources.

14. On the prioritisation table, PSBs should allocate a level of priority (Higher, Medium or Lower) to each cluster of activities identified on the proforma. Given their limited size, PSBs that account for less than 5% of total ECE resources (Human Settlements, Timber and Sustainable Energy) may, if necessary, prioritise on a two-tier basis (Higher or Lower). Each priority level must contain at least one cluster of activity. PSBs should also identify the number of regular budget Professional staff (excluding Divisional Directors) for each cluster of activities. This need not be a round number, for a cluster of activities may, for example, cover 1.3 or 2.7 staff.

15. The two additional boxes on the proforma will ask the PSBs to consider the impact on their activities in the event of an addition or a reduction of one staff member. This will help the PSB to consider potential new areas of activity and the impact of a budget reduction. PSBs are encouraged to consider carrying out new activities from within their existing resource allocation, in which case prior reference to the GEPW is not necessary. The GEPW need only be consulted if additional resources were required.

IV. Procedures to be used in preparing and completing the Proforma

16. For each PSB, the Chairman of the GEPW would discuss the clusters of activity to be prioritised (and therefore placed in the proforma), with the PSB Secretary and the Divisional Director who would in turn consult their respective PSB Bureau.

17. Once the clusters of activities have been determined, the PSB will be asked to complete the proforma. Ideally, the Bureau of the PSB should complete the proforma in draft before submitting it to the Committee at its annual session in the budget submission year.

18. The prioritisation table must be discussed and agreed by the PSB as a whole. For the boxes, in the absence of consensus, the PSB can submit (on supplementary pages if necessary) the different options expressed by member States.

19. The completed proforma, once agreed by the Committee, should be passed to the Office of the Executive Secretary for collation on behalf of the GEPW in advance of the submission by the Executive Secretary of the budget narrative.

V. Conclusion

20. The revised prioritisation process is intended to be both cooperative and consultative. Any problems that are identified during the process should be discussed and resolved as soon as possible, to ensure that the end result is not affected. For that purpose, the GEPW will be available for consultation, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss or clarify the concerns of PSBs as necessary.

VI. Draft Proforma for the Conference's work programme

21. A proposed draft proforma for the Statistical Division's and the Conference's work programme is presented in Annex II. That annex shows the distribution of the 18 professional posts (excluding the Director's post) by Programme Activity Area that are in the budget of the Statistical Division to support the work of the Division during the 2002-2003 biennium. Twelve of these 18 professional posts are intended to support the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians, and the remaining six are intended to provide professional and statistical support to the Economic Analysis Division.

22. The draft version of this paper and the contents of the proforma were reviewed by the CES Bureau at its 4 March 2002 meeting from the standpoint of both the expectations of the GEPW and the Conference. The Bureau concluded that the draft proforma was prepared along the lines called for by the Group of Experts on the programme of Work. Consequently, it asked the secretariat to proceed and issue the paper as a document for the 2002 plenary session. The Bureau also approved the content of Annex I and II of the paper, and recommends to the Conference that the Conference approve the contents of this paper, and particularly Annex II of the paper, so that it can be forwarded to the ECE's Office of the Executive Secretary for forwarding to the Group of Experts on behalf of the Conference.

Annex I: Example of blank Proforma

SECTION 1: PRIORITISATION

Please complete the following prioritisation table. Each priority level (Higher, Medium or Lower) must contain at least one cluster of activities. The number of regular budget Professional staff (excluding the Divisional Director) must be shown against each cluster of activity e.g. 0.7, 1.4 etc.

No	Clusters (or Main Subject Areas) of Activities	Priority Level (H, M, L)	Regular Budget Professional Staff
1			
2			
3			
4			
5 etc.			

SECTION 2: ACTIVITY OPTIONS

With the addition of one extra staff member, what additional activities would the Committee consider?

With the reduction of one staff member, what activities would the Committee consider reducing?

Annex II: Draft Proforma for the Statistical Division and CES Work Programme**SECTION 1: PRIORITISATION**

No	Clusters (or Main Subject Areas) of Activities	Priority Level (H, M, L)	Regular Budget Professional Staff
1	Programme Activity 1: Organisation and operation of statistical services	H	2.50
2	Programme Activity 2: Technical infrastructure and other cross-cutting issues	H	2.30
3	Programme Activity 3: Economic statistics	H	3.50
4	Programme Activity 4: Social and demographic statistics	H	1.00
5	Programme Activity 5: Environment statistics	M	0.20
6	Programme Activity 6: Dissemination and support for secretariat activities		(8.50) <u>a/</u>
	a) work on publications in the CES work programme	H	1.85
	b) work on publications in the CES work programme	L	0.65
	c) provision of statistics and statistical services in support of economic analysis in the ECE	H	5.65
	d) provision of statistics and statistical services in support of economic analysis in the ECE.	L	0.35
	Total, all Programme Activity Areas	--	Total = 18 posts

a/ Programme Activity 6 includes six regular budget professional posts in the Statistical Division to ensure that economic analysis conducted by the ECE is founded on (a) relevant, timely, and harmonized statistics and (b) a professional statistical advisory capacity and statistical services. It also includes 2.5 regular budget professional posts that are used to support other work on publications in the Conference's work programme.

SECTION 2: ACTIVITY OPTIONS

With the addition of one extra staff member, what additional activities would the Conference consider?

If the Statistical Division were to receive one additional post, it would be used to deliver more information products such as the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work in the ECE Region and macro economic and social statistics, tables and charts, via the WEB. (The conversion of the Integrated Presentation into a web-based database product would enable national and international statistical offices to use it more effectively as a working tool, complete with search engines, to meet their own tailor-made purposes).

In association with this, the additional post would be used to integrate the three different database management systems currently in the Division (the macro-economic database, the social statistics database and the prototype Integrated Presentation database currently in the initial stages of being developed) to support these planned future WEB-based products.

With the reduction of one staff member, what activities would the Conference consider reducing?

Staff allocated to Programme Activities 1-4 cannot be reduced because of the high priority of these activities for National Statistical Offices and of the already low level of resources available for their implementation. Programme Activity 6 was designated as a "high" priority area in the 1997 ECE reform process and has recently been augmented following that directive. This activity includes regular budget professional posts in the Statistical Division that are used for statistical support for economic and other sectoral analyses (notably, the "Economic Survey of Europe"), ECE common database development, various publications and data dissemination.

Notwithstanding this, in the event of a one-post reduction to the Statistical Division, this would inevitably result in a curtailment or scaling down of activities in the following two main areas of work of the Division (i) work on publications in the CES work programme (decrease of the equivalent of 65% of one P-post); and (ii) work by the Statistical Division in the provision of statistics and statistical services in support of economic analysis in other parts of the ECE secretariat (decrease of the equivalent of 35% of one P-post).
