

Recent work by the Conference of European Statisticians

Meeting on frameworks for environment statistics (Geneva, 18–20 March 1981)

The subject of the meeting was a free discussion on the full range of problems encountered in the development of frameworks for environment statistics. The Canadian Stress-Response Environmental Statistics System (STRESS) was considered on the basis of a comparative survey of national compendia of environment statistics, in which STRESS was used. In addition, a case study of STRESS as applied to the Laurentian Lower Great Lakes was reviewed. Finally, the impact of systems of national accounts on frameworks for environment statistics was discussed.

Consultation on the conversion key between the SITC and the SFTC (Geneva, 22–24 April 1981)

The subject of the meeting was the finalization of the Correspondence Table between the United Nations Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and the Standard Foreign Trade Classification (SFTC) of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The review was based on the results of a test carried out by the Central Statistical Offices of Austria and Hungary. The meeting finalized a conversion key, which will be published shortly. The key converts SFTC into SITC categories. The meeting also discussed future work on the conversion of categories in the opposite direction.

Fourth joint meeting on the development of science and technology statistics (Geneva, 4–7 May 1981)

The meeting was co-sponsored by the conference of European Statisticians, the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Science and Technology, and UNESCO. The meeting specified a procedure for preparing a possible pilot study on the description of technology flows involving ECE member countries. Further investigations into the utility of patent statistics for the measurement of technology transfers were agreed.

Meeting on statistics of water use and quality of water (Geneva, 18–20 May 1981)

The meeting was convened in co-operation between the Conference of European Statisticians and the ECE Committee on Water Problems. The meeting provided a first outline of a draft standard international classification of water use and quality.

Seventeenth session of the Working Party on Electronic Data Processing (Geneva, 18–22 May 1981)

The participants exchanged views on the use of computers in statistical offices, such as the problems of distributed processing, the impact of mass-storage devices on statistical processing and the use of procedural and non-procedural interactive languages. The meeting also considered the report of the Group of Rapporteurs on computer aspects of registers in statistical offices, drew up a revised programme of work and recommended that a Directory of generalized computer programs in use in statistical offices be prepared.

Consultation on current problems of the European comparisons within the framework of the ICP (Vienna, 25–27 May 1981)

The recent modifications in the work programme of the United Nations Statistical Office relating to the International Comparison Project (ICP) for 1981–1982 and their repercussions on the European ICP programme were discussed. The consultation proposed measures to be taken in the ongoing European programme under the new circumstances, with special regard to the comparisons within 'Group II' countries of the European programme (Austria, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia).

Meeting on problems relating to household surveys (Geneva, 1–4 June 1981)

The meeting discussed the methodological and organizational aspects of household surveys, particularly the problems of longitudinal panel surveys and rotating sampling schemes, the treatment of non-response, and evaluation studies. The meeting also considered the question of the presentation of the quality of survey results. A list of topics for further work was agreed. The need for further work on the question of guidelines for the presentation of the quality of statistics was stressed, and the need for an internationally accepted terminology in this field was noted.

Meeting on food and agricultural statistics in Europe (Geneva, 9–12 June 1981)

The meeting was convened jointly by the Conference of European Statisticians, the FAO, and the ECE Committee on Agricultural Problems. It reviewed earlier international recommendations on statistics and balances for livestock and animal products and suggested updating in several areas. In addition, the meeting completed work on production and utilization statistics of other products (potatoes, sugar beets, sugar, oilseeds, oil crops and vegetable oil). A revised programme of work on agricultural statistics for the years 1982–1986 was proposed. Future work should mainly concentrate on (i) statistics of the agricultural labour force and labour input; (ii) the use of farm book keeping and its harmonization with other agricultural statistics; (iii) the finalization of a European Handbook of Economic Accounts for Agriculture; and (iv) the preparation of the programme for the 1990 World Census of Agriculture.

Meeting on general energy statistics (Geneva, 14–16 September 1981)

The general purpose of the meeting was to provide guidance to the Conference's future work in this field. Four general directions of work were recommended: (i) Development of a standard classification for both energy commodities and activities; (ii) development of energy price information; (iii) development of statistical tools for describing energy demand and use in a satisfactory way; and (iv) consideration of methodological problems in statistics on the production and use of new and renewable forms of energy.

Seminar on statistical data collection and processing systems under new conditions (Moscow, 21–25 September 1981)

The seminar was held in Moscow at the invitation of the Government of the USSR. The seminar was intended for Government officials concerned with statistical policy issues at the highest level. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss problems related to the development of statistical data collection and processing systems. The discussion covered a wide range of topics around four major themes: (i) the interrelationship between statistical offices and other organizations concerned with the collection, processing and analysis of statistical information; (ii) the role of modern techniques in the regionalization of statistical activities; (iii) methods to ensure quality, reliability, timeliness and confidentiality of statistics; and (iv) training of staff in the use of EDP facilities.

Meeting on statistics of consumer prices (Geneva, 5–8 October 1981)

The meeting was co-sponsored by the Conference of European Statisticians and the International Labour Organisation. It considered various special factors

affecting consumer price indices (CPI). Such topics as the coverage of housing, durables, credits, and social security contributions in CPI compilations; the measurement of the effect on the CPI of changes in indirect taxes and subsidies; the calculation of an index showing the change in money income before tax; measurements of the effects of changes in import prices; problems of international comparisons in this area and the treatment of quality changes, were discussed. The meeting agreed on a list of topics for further work.

Meeting on methodological problems of environment statistics (Geneva, 9–12 November 1981)

The meeting was asked to elaborate a structural framework for the Conference's future work on methodological problems. Twenty-three areas were identified and grouped under four broad headings. In addition, the meeting formulated some fifty specific topics for future contributions in this field.

Meeting on statistics of water use and quality (Geneva, 18–21 January 1982)

The Conference of European Statisticians and the ECE Committee on Water Problems co-sponsored the meeting. An agreement was reached on a recommendation for a draft standard international classification of water use and quality. Furthermore, the meeting gave a clear ecosystem orientation to future work by the Conference on this project.