Recent work of the Conference of European Statisticians

The twenty-first session of the Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Europe (Geneva, 5–9 July 1993)

The meeting considered the following items: (i) preparation of a handbook of concepts and definitions used in international collections of food and agriculture statistics; (ii) revision of FAO recommendations for agricultural censuses; (iii) development of proposals for conceptual work on statistics for environment-related agricultural problems; (iv) statistical description of the transition process in the agricultural sector; (v) methods used for the establishment of historical time series for agricultural statistics in transition countries; (vi) quality control of agricultural statistics; (vii) problems with forecasts of agricultural production and improvement of the precision of the corresponding forecasting methods; (viii) anticipation of future needs for agricultural and food statistics.

The study group decided to confine its activities in the following major areas: problems of establishing new agricultural statistics in transition countries; participation in the preparation of international census recommendations; statistics on the relationship between agriculture and the environment; harmonization of international data collection; and methodological discussions. (Report: FAO/ECE.ESS(93)-17; CES/AC.61/39.)

Work session on statistics of services (Geneva, 13–15 September 1993)

The purpose of the work session was to review the work underway in ECE, Eurostat and OECD in statistics of services and to advise the Conference of European Statisticians on its further work in this field, bearing in mind the need to avoid any unneccessary duplication of activities between the three organizations involved. The work session also provided a possibility to transition countries to be informed of an to benefit from the work on service statistics by Eurostat and OECD.

The work session agreed that future UN/ECE meetings on service statistics should be primarily oriented towards assisting transition countries in identifying and solving problems in this area. The work session recommended to include in the programme of work of the conference the following issues which are of particular interest to transition countries: testing of the Eurostat methodological manual of

statistics on service enterprises; implementation of pilot surveys in various service sectors in transition countries; definition and measurement of non-market services; problems of deflation and short-term indicators of service production; measurement of household and imputed rents. (Report: CES/793.)

Joint ECE/EC (Eurostat) work session on specific methodological issues in environment statistics (Bratislava, 20–23 September 1993)

The joint meeting was held in Bratislava at the invitation of the Slovak Statistical Office. It discussed (i) plans, practices and problems of environment statistics obtained from statistical surveys and/or databases; (ii) plans, practices and problems of environment statistics obtained from environmental monitoring data; (iii) related aspects of the environmental statistical production process; (iv) development of comprehensive sets of environmental indicators or indices; (v) environmental accounting; and (vi) the use of international cooperation in national statistical offices. Furthermore, guidance was provided to the reactivation of the CES work programme in environment statistics. (Report of the joint work session: (CES/794.)

Work session on Geographical Information Systems – GIS (Ottawa, Canada, 28–30 September 1993)

The meeting exchanged experiences in GIS methodology/applications for sampling, data collection and editing in national offices and discussed various tools and methods for integrating and analysing statistical information. Furthermore, it considered possibilities of how to use GIS for presenting and disseminating statistical information. Based on these discussions, the work session recommended that this group should meet regularly in order to coordinate international efforts in respect of GIS and its use in the statistical area. It is also going to define statistical requirements which should be taken care of when developing international standards for GIS. (Report: CES/795.)

Work session on statistical data editing (Stockholm, Sweden, 11–15 October 1993)

This meeting considered (i) data editing methods, techniques and software; (ii) new technologies in data editing; (iii) collection and editing of data from administrative sources; (iv) impact of data editing on quality of data; (v) automatic coding; (vi) definition and documentation of data editing rules; and (vii) imputation of missing values. The meeting also reviewed the contents of the first volume on data editing methods and techniques it had published a year ago. Furthermore, as the first volume covers data editing methods, it was decided to start working on a second volume which will cover their implementation problems. (Report: CES/797.)

Workshop on the evaluation of results of technical assistance in statistical offices of transition countries (Sinaia, Romania, 12–14 October 1993)

The workshop provided a first broad assessment of progress achieved so far in the: a) identification and prioritization of statistical fields in which technical assistance is required; b) the formulation of technical assistance programmes; c) the implementation of the programmes; and d) the coordination of programmes. The workshop was both the opportunity for donor organizations and countries to compare among themselves experience gained so far, and for donor and recipient countries to consider collectively what lessons may be drawn from experience in planning, implementing and coordinating programmes of technical assistance.

Work session on business registers (Geneva, 18–20 October 1993)

The purpose of the work session was to review the work underway in ECE and Eurostat in business registers and to advise the Conference of European Statisticians on its further work in this area. The work session also provided a possibility to exchange information on the progress made in assisting transition countries in establishing new business registers.

In view of the activities of other international fora in business registers, the work session recommended that ECE activities in this area be limited to specific issues. One of the issues mentioned was the implementation, in cooperation with Eurostat, of panel techniques in transition countries to obtain information on the demography of enterprises under the conditions of rapid economic changes in these countries. (Report: CES/796.)

Joint ECE/ILO meeting on consumer price indices (Geneva, 25–28 October 1993)

The meeting considered a number of issues related to the compilation of consumer price indices (CPI). They included: (i) treatment of quality changes including hedonic regression methods; (ii) fixed-base versus chain indices; (iii) treatment of non-market goods in CPI, including owner-occupied housing; (iv) progress reports on the CPI harmonization work in Eurostat and on the improvement of CPI methodology in transition countries; and (v) implications of the revised SNA for CPI.

The following items were pointed out as important for future work: owner-occupied housing in the computation of CPI and problems related to the choice of index formulae. Particular importance was also attached to the needs of transition countries in establishing consumer price indices. A number of additional items were identified as potential issues for methodological discussion at the next meeting. (Report: CES/AC.49/50.)