

Introduction

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This special issue of the ECE Statistical Journal contains papers presented at the Siena Group meeting in Oslo in June 1995. In October 1993, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) organized, in memory of Sir Richard Stone, a seminar on national accounting and social statistics in Siena. In discussions between ISTAT, Statistics Sweden, Statistics Norway and EUROSTAT, it was later agreed to continue the work on developing and co-ordinating social statistics, starting in Siena. The work was to be organized around a core of interested individuals and statistical agencies, all taking part on a voluntary basis and without any formal mandate from international or national statistical organizations.

It was decided as the next step that “the Siena Group” of statisticians, researchers and other experts active in the field of social statistics would meet at a seminar in Stockholm in June 1995. The idea behind the seminar was to make an inventory of the state-of-the-art that might then serve as a basis for continued work of the group. Some of the papers presented at the Stockholm seminar have been published in recent issues of the Statistical Journal.

Later seminars should concentrate on more specific topics. The themes of the seminar in Oslo were:

- Monitoring vulnerable groups, concentrating on the case of young people.
- Methods, data sources and data needs when studying social exclusion among young people.
- Social policy and social monitoring, as a follow up of the Stockholm seminar.

The articles published in this issue of the Statistical Journal and the discussions that took place at the Oslo seminar show the great need for further conceptual work. Social exclusion, vulnerability, and youth are elusive concepts and work in this area must be multidimensional and multidisciplinary. It is necessary to establish linkages, i.e., between education and labour market and between family background and integration.

The statistical implication of this is that social indicators are inadequate. Dynamic analysis using longitudinal data is required. It is thus necessary to promote integrated reporting, using several sources in the analysis. The national statistical institutes should make more use of available data for analysis and interpretation, promote part-

nership with research institutions, increase dissemination of data, etc.

These views were reflected in the discussions at the Oslo seminar and some general strategies for social statistics were put forward:

- Increase the authority of social statistics through consistent timeseries and reconciliation of conflicting information, as well as through increasing validity of information by integrating different sources.
- Efficient use of existing resources through use of registers in combination with surveys, and through integrated design of social surveys.
- Diminishing fragmentation by developing information on relation between variables, between domains of life and between social and economic variables.
- The integration approach also apply to the production of monitoring reports and to international integration of social statistics. At this stage of development the output oriented approach to comparability should be preferred.

The topic of the next Siena Group seminar will be *Intergenerational Relations and Social Mobility*. The meeting will be in Paris in June 1996, hosted by INSEE.

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