

Recent work of the Conference of European Statisticians

Eighth session of the Working Party on the Framework for the Integration of Social and Demographic Statistics

(Geneva, 30 January – 3 February 1984)

The Working Party on the FSDS considered the following topics: (i) population censuses as multi-subject data bases; (ii) links between selected fields of social and demographic statistics (particularly health, education and housing statistics) and national accounts; (iii) internationally recommended classifications (socio-economic groups and related classifications received most attention); (iv) co-ordination of statistics of households and families; and (v) social indicators. On the basis of a review of the developments in the work on the FSDS since 1978, the Working Party formulated recommendations concerning the organization and direction of the future work by the Conference of European Statisticians on this project.

(Report of the meeting: CES/WP.24/56).

Meeting on international comparison of real product and purchasing power parities

(Geneva, 6–8 February 1984)

The meeting evaluated the progress achieved and problems encountered in the European Comparison Programme of GDP which was carried out as part of Phase IV of the International Comparison Project (ICP) of the United Nations. The meeting also discussed the draft report of the comparison of real product and purchasing power parities for 17 European countries and agreed on the publication of an analytical report. The possibility of organizing a European round of comparisons also within Phase V of the ICP was evaluated and a corresponding proposal was made. Finally, the participants commented on a proposed system of indicators characterizing the economic and social development of a country.

(Report of the meeting: CES/513).

Meeting on economic classifications

(Geneva, 20–24 February 1984)

The meeting considered the general structure of the future Standard International Trade Classification (SITC, Rev. 3) and its links with other international economic classifications, such as the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the draft Combined Trade/Production Goods Classification. The meeting presented several recommendations to the UN

Statistical Office concerning, inter alia, the level of detail of the revised SITC and the classification of specific commodities. The revised draft SITC, Rev. 3 will be submitted for approval to the twenty-third session of the UN Statistical Commission to be held in February-March 1985.

(Report of the meeting: CES/AC.59/7).

Meeting on statistics of air quality

(Geneva, 27–29 February 1984)

The meeting was attended by statisticians, meteorologists and health experts. Its prime purpose was to give guidance to the development of an international standard statistical classification of air pollution. On the basis of a review of the WHO Manual on Ambient Air Pollutants from Industrial Sources, both a short list of variables suitable for use in air pollution statistics and a more comprehensive framework for the long-term national development of such statistics were recommended. Furthermore, the meeting discussed statistical possibilities to describe long-range transport of air pollutants and identified a series of methodological problems for further work by the Conference of European Statisticians in this area.

(Report of the meeting: CES/516).

Consultation on co-operation between ECE member countries carrying out price observations in other countries

(Geneva, 8–9 March 1984)

The representatives of interested countries and international organizations which regularly carry out price observations in other countries considered several possible forms of co-operation in this field. In order to assist governments and international organizations better in the adjustment of salaries and allowances of personnel employed abroad, participants in the consultation agreed on harmonizing the list and the specifications of commodities for which prices are collected. It was suggested to convene another consultation in two or three years to consider proposals for further co-operation.

(Report of the meeting: CES/519).

Meeting on environmental indicators

(Geneva, 19–22 March 1984)

The meeting discussed and approved a list of environmental concerns which will be used by the Conference of European Statisticians in establishing a system of environmental indicators. In developing the system, maximum possible use is to be made of suitable indicators developed in other international organizations. The meeting also considered a report by Statistics Canada on measures of ecosystem distress and a report by the Central Statistical Office of the United Kingdom on the river quality classification in England and Wales.

(Report of the meeting: CES/AC.58/6).

Seminar on Integrated Statistical Information Systems and related matters
(ISIS '84; Geneva, 16–19 April 1984).

The Seminar considered the problems of statistical information systems design, of the use of mini- and micro-computers as integrated parts of the statistical processing system and of the user-friendliness of interfaces. The papers submitted to the Seminar presented a wide picture of national experiences in these various areas.

(Report of the seminar: CES/SEM.16/5).

Meeting on general methodological problems in environment statistics
(Paris, 16–19 April 1984)

The Government of France had invited this second annual meeting on general methodological problems in environment statistics to Paris. The meeting dealt with the relationship between economic statistics on one hand and environment statistics on the other. The following individual subject-matter areas were discussed on the basis of papers drafted by experts from national statistical offices: (i) theoretical problems of statistics on investments for environmental protection; (ii) national practices in collecting statistics on investments and current expenditure for environmental protection; (iii) connections between national accounts, natural patrimony accounts and accounts of nature and the environment; (iv) estimation of the production of residues; and (v) statistical representation of the connections between the economy and the environment.

(Report of the meeting: CES/518).

Seminar on the evaluation of census results and methodology
(Rome, 7–11 May 1984)

This seminar was held in Rome at the invitation of the Government of Italy. The participants reviewed various problems that countries in the ECE region had encountered in the pre-enumeration, enumeration and post-enumeration phases of their most recent population and housing census, exchanged national experiences on the use of sampling in the different phases of the census, considered coverage and content errors in census data, and issues concerning statistics for small areas. Also reviewed were the plans for work by the Conference of European Statisticians on the preparation of recommendations for the 1990 round of population and housing censuses.

(Report of the seminar: CES/SEM.17/4).

Meeting on food and agricultural statistics in Europe
(Geneva, 4–8 June 1984)

The fifteenth session of the Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Europe was convened jointly by the Conference of European Statisticians, the ECE Committee on Agricultural Problems and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It reviewed the programme for the 1990 World Census of Agricul-

ture, considering appropriate recommendations and the utilization of the census results as a basis for establishing or updating farm registers. The Study Group intends to discuss in 1985/86 a European version of the World Census programme. The meeting proposed a programme of future work for the next five years. At its session in 1985 the Study Group will undertake an over-all review of recommendations made in the past regarding the collection and compilation of statistics. Furthermore, it will prepare complete guidelines on area, production and utilization of the various agricultural commodities.

(Report of the meeting: FAO/ECE/CES:ESS(84)-11).

Thirty-second plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 18–22 June 1984)

The Conference considered in a substantive discussion the organization of electronic data processing in national statistical offices – centralization versus decentralization, and the development of training programmes for personnel of statistical offices in the light of technological developments. It also discussed in-depth the past results and future work on international comparisons, particularly as regards the European Comparison Programme within the world level International Comparison Programme of real gross domestic production and of purchasing power parities (ICP). The Conference reviewed the current activities under its work programme and adopted a revised programme of work for 1984/85-1988/89.

(Report of the meeting: ECE/CES/24).

Publication of guidelines for the preparation of presentations of the scope and quality of statistics

The Conference of European Statisticians at its thirty-second plenary session in June 1984 adopted guidelines for the preparation of presentations of the scope and quality of statistics for users. The guidelines had been developed in various meetings since 1981.

The guidelines are intended to assist statistical offices in preparing presentations of the scope and quality of statistics for their users. The guidelines contain brief sections dealing with such issues as: data source and definitions; target universe; survey design and methodology; field procedures and estimation methods; assessment of errors generally and of major sources of errors (non-response rates and non-response errors, sampling errors, and measurement, processing and other types of error); comparability over time; comparability with other statistics; and availability of supplementary information on the quality of data.

The guidelines are meant to be applied to primary statistical publications. The guidelines as adopted by the Conference have been published in the annex of the report of the 1983 meeting on statistical methodology (CES/AC.48/52).