

GENERAL PRICE STATISTICS AND THE ICP

The European Comparison Programme

Report prepared by the ECE

1. In the framework of Phase V of the ICP, ECE completed the 1985 round of the European Comparison Programme (ECP) with the participation of 20 European countries. The report on that comparison was published in September 1988; see "International Comparison of Gross Domestic Product in Europe 1985 - Statistical Standard and Studies - No. 41" (Sales Number E.88.II.E.28).
2. At its thirty-sixth plenary session (June 1988) the Conference of European Statisticians agreed to launch a new phase of the European comparison and requested the secretariat to consult with interested national and international statistical offices.
3. The first consultation on the new phase was held in Vienna on 6-9 March 1989. It was agreed that 1990 would be the reference year of the next phase.
4. It is expected that the country scope of the 1990 comparison will be larger than in 1985 by the participation of Iceland (through its participation in the OECD exercise), Switzerland (taking part in the EUROSTAT comparison), the USSR and - presumably - Czechoslovakia.
5. The general organization scheme of the 1990 ECP will be the same as in 1985, i.e. EUROSTAT and OECD will conduct their own comparison which then will be combined with the results obtained for countries compared under the direct auspice of ECE.
6. The EUROSTAT comparison will be carried out on an annual basis, i.e. the setting up of annual parities will be based on new data (by price surveys for about one third of the basket), on the one hand and on extrapolated data by using detailed national indices, on the other hand. In principle OECD will follow the same continuous scheme. The rest of the countries, however, will conduct a single benchmark comparison for 1990.
7. Austria, Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia agreed to conduct a comparison within ECP for 1990 on the same basis as for 1985. As before, this set of countries will form Group II. Czechoslovakia also announced its interest in joining Group II, provided a final decision be taken on its participation. It was agreed that, as in the previous phases, countries will conduct bilateral comparisons with Austria. The results will be linked to EUROSTAT results through Austria.

8. The USSR will join the comparison through a bilateral exercise conducted either with the Federal Republic of Germany or with Austria.

9. Efforts were made for harmonizing the methods and classifications used in the various country groups of the ECP. For this purpose, a uniform coding system was established.

10. A detailed timetable for work in ECP was also established, according to which final results for 1990 will be available in the fourth quarter of 1992.