

STATISTICAL CO-OPERATION WITH COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION:  
CO-OPERATION DATABASE

Paper by Eurostat

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This document presents Eurostat's experience concerning the database on statistical co-operation with transition countries, referred to hereafter by the acronym CONTACT (Co-Ordination Network for Technical Assistance to Countries in Transition).

B. BACKGROUND

2. Eurostat was given the responsibility for G24 co-ordination of technical assistance in statistics to Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEECs). In order to help undertake this task a database on co-operation activities was set up in 1991 on a single PC using DBase IV.

3. This database covered all technical assistance actions in statistics by G24 countries and international organisations to the CEECs. This database was populated from two sources:

- (a) from Eurostat's internal management information for PHARE and Eurostat co-operation;
- (b) from responses to a questionnaire sent to assisting countries and international organisations for other assistance.

A questionnaire was sent out twice each year, and we received responses from most donors. The latest extracts from the database were sent out with the questionnaire.

4. As a result of our initial experience with this database it became increasingly clear that the original system was not adequate in order to fulfil its intended purpose, or to ensure that the contents of the database were consistent with internal management information in Eurostat. For this reason the collection of data from assisting agencies was suspended at the beginning of 1994.

5. It was therefore decided to develop a new system on a more powerful computing environment that would meet the needs above, and serve itself as a management tool for the organisation of

co-operation within Eurostat for both the TACIS and PHARE programmes. This integration of internal management and external co-ordination information is the key element in ensuring that the information contained is useful and up to date.

### C. CURRENT SITUATION

6. A system specification was drawn up within Eurostat which defined the characteristics required of the system. This was approved early in 1994 but its implementation was delayed due to a lack of available human and financial resources to carry out the development.

7. In November 1994 a small budget became available, and a call for tender was launched to select an external contractor to work on the development. The successful contractor (Alcatel) began work on this project at the end of December. The development is being carried out in close co-operation with the users in Eurostat. The database prototype has been delivered and is currently being tested. It is expected that the system will be fully operational in mid-July. It is anticipated however that further minor modifications and refinements may be necessary based on our practical experience with the system.

8. This new system will serve the following purposes:

- (a) as a G24 co-ordination tool for assistance to CEECs;
- (b) to provide data for entry via an automated procedure onto the IMF database on FSU countries;
- (c) as a management tool for Eurostat on the Community's PHARE and TACIS assistance programmes.

9. It will conform to the following principles:

- (a) it will cover all axes of statistical co-operation, i.e. assistance in institution building, technical assistance and training;
- (b) it will cover all assistance from G24 donors and international organisations to ECO countries, but only EU assistance to FSU countries;
- (c) it will be fully compatible with the IMF's database on assistance to FSU countries.
- (d) CONTACT forms the "core" of an integrated management information system within Eurostat used as a tool for the management of statistical co-operation.

The coding used is to be consistent with the database of IMF on assistance to FSU countries.

D. FUTURE TASKS

10. The following tasks still need to be undertaken, once CONTACT is fully operational:

- (a) relaunching of the data collection and dissemination of assisting countries and international organisations co-operation with the CEECs;
- (b) implementation of an automated system for updating the IMF database with the relevant information from CONTACT;
- (c) examination of the possibility of electronic data exchange with other offices.