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NEW DATA COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
Report prepared by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the
Commonwealth of Independent States

1. Interstate Statistical Committee constantly improves methods of collection, processing and dissemination of statistical information. At present this process becomes especially urgent due to the fact that more and more users are interested in receiving statistical information in electronic form (diskettes, databases, CD-ROM).

During three years already statistical information has been transmitted from the majority of CIS national statistical services to the CIS Statcommittee by means of electronic mail. With that end in view 58 questionnaires for collecting monthly, as well as most important quarterly and annual data, were designed with the help of EXCEL software and transferred to CIS national statistical services to be filled in. This enabled to automatize collection and processing of statistical information as well as to ensure more rapid supply of the users with information.

2. New opportunities in the field of statistical information exchange are provided due to the connection of the CIS Statcommittee to Internet system. In fact, Internet is used in the CIS Statcommittee for receiving statistical information from national statistical services of the CIS countries (e.g. Georgia). Apart from that, under way at present are works on organization of macroeconomic information exchange via Internet between the Statis-

tical Division of the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the CIS Statcommittee with the use of EDIFACT standards.

3. Now it is clear that CD-ROM technology is a perspective way to store and disseminate information. The CIS Statcommittee is working now on introducing this technology; necessary equipment for reading and recording of information on CD-ROM has been obtained. Recently there was prepared CD-ROM containing the results of 1989 population census of the former USSR; works are under way on preparation of CD-ROM containing data for more than 3500 main socio-economic indicators since 1980.

4. Development and maintaining of automatized databases are essential features of modern storage, analysis and dissemination of statistical information. To maintain databases the CIS Statcommittee utilizes integrated systems which contain not only the means for maintaining databases but also the means for analysis, calculations and data presentation. At present the CIS Statcommittee maintains databases "Statistics" and "CIS STAT".

5. The computer database "Statistics" is an efficient and inexpensive tool of rapid supply of users with statistical information on the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The computer database "Statistics" contains about 5000 tables and consists of the following sections:

- operative information (monthly and quarterly data);
- annual data;
- analytic reports;
- data by each CIS country.

This database contains macroeconomic indicators, information on prices, output of industrial and agricultural products, interstate trade of commodities, data on external economic activities, population, its employment, consumer market, money income and expenditure of the population, problems of social sphere, etc.

The database is updated on a monthly basis. Twenty four hours a day on-line access enables rapid supply of information to the user.

6. Database "CIS STAT" is an integrated system of storage and processing of socio-economic information. This database contains annual data (since 1980) on 17 branches of statistics including 3500 socio-economic indicators (more than 40 thous. time series).

7. Despite the fact that electronic products become widely spread, publications are still very important source of information for the user. Constant work is under way on improving their content, wider use of graphs and cartography.

8. Usefulness of statistical information depends not only on its accuracy but on the moment from which it becomes accessible. In this regard already in January 1996 the CIS Statcommittee prepared statistical abstract containing preliminary results of socio-economic development of the CIS countries in 1995. Apart from that, along with the issue of monthly express report "Economy of the Commonwealth of Independent States" and Statistical Bulletin (twice per month), containing operative information on the progress of economic reforms in CIS member countries, the CIS Statcommittee issues the following publications: "Commonwealth of Independent States", "External Economic Activities of the CIS Countries", "Finances and Prices of the CIS Countries", "National Accounts of the CIS Countries", "Environment in CIS Countries", "World in Figures", "Demographic Yearbook", "Short-Term Economic Indicators of the Commonwealth Countries" and other.

Practically all the publications prepared by the Committee are disseminated not only in a printed matter form but on diskettes as well.

9. The Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS is an official disseminator of information on socio-economic situation in the CIS countries. In this regard one of the main directions of its activities is study of the needs in statistical information. For the purpose of studying the information market the CIS Statcommittee issues and disseminates catalogue "Publications and Information Services" in Russian and English.

10. Our experience has shown that rather efficient means of information dissemination are subscription services, i.e. when a user of information concludes a contract with the CIS Statcommittee for a year period. In this case a customer has an access to information, right of direct order and priority in its implementation.

Subscribers are entitled to the following services:

- permanent access to the database "Statistics" (with monthly updating of data);
- receipt of all current and annual publications of the Committee;
- receipt of statistical materials on subjects of special interest by additional order of subscriber;
- consultations on methodology of calculation of individual statistical indicators, information on international standards in the field of statistical science and practice, instructions on completion of state statistical reporting forms and carrying out different statistical calculations.

11. One of the important and comparatively new directions of the CIS Statcommittee activities is its participation in book fairs and information services exhibitions enabling to study demand on statistical information and increase the number of this information users. Thus, the CIS Statcommittee participated twice in International Exhibition of Information and Information Services "Informexpo" (Moscow). In October 1995 for the first time there was organized a joint stand of the CIS Statcommittee and national statistical services of Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt, which enabled to obtain experience in marketing and dissemination of statistical data, establish closer links with the users, disseminators and publishers of statistical information, as well as to get knowledge of the work with public and mass media.