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JOINT DATA COLLECTION
1997/1998 update

Note by ECE, Eurostat and OECD

I. INTRODUCTION

(a) Background and structure of the note

At the forty-fifth session of the Conference, the secretariats of UN/ECE, Eurostat and OECD presented a Note entitled "Joint data collection", summarizing how they were proceeding to streamline data collection from member countries, in the interests of reducing the response burden of their respective member states. An assessment of the status of joint data collection/data sharing of ECE, Eurostat, OECD and selected other international organizations were given as well as some proposals for improvements. The Conference asked the UN/ECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations to continue this work and to report progress to the next plenary session.

2. The process of streamlining and co-ordinating data collection among UN/ECE, OECD and Eurostat is of course a continuous one. The present Note is an update not only of the achievements of these three organizations in the area of

streamlining international data collection but also of other international organizations engaged in data collection, of which some 30 have been approached with a request to review their activities with this objective.

3. The structure of the present Note is the same as that of last year's Note, that is, data collection activities in various subject fields are classified into the following three groups which are also sections of the present Note:

- II. Areas that seem to be working well
- III. Areas where there are problems to be resolved
- IV. Future action

4. For each subject area, there is also an indication to which programme element of the CES Integrated Programme the subject area primarily belongs to.

(b) Main achievements in 1997/1998

5. As the present Note surveys activities not only by UN/ECE, Eurostat and OECD but also many other organizations, there are several new subject areas which have been included, when compared with the Note prepared for the 1997 Conference.

6. In the same time, progress can be reported in several subject areas, implying agreement of joint data collection by international organizations. More specifically, it has implied that the following areas have been able to be moved either from part III or part IV to part II:

- ◆ EU candidate countries (PE 3.1)
- ◆ Foreign direct investment (PE 3.2)
- ◆ Merchandise trade statistics (PE 3.3)
- ◆ Innovation survey (PE 3.13)
- ◆ Unemployment (PE 4.10).

7. Reference can also be made to the draft Eurostat/OECD protocol on data exchange and publications that has been on the drafting board for a considerable length of time, but where some progress may soon be anticipated. When other organizations, starting with the ECE, are brought into such an agreement it would imply a major achievement for streamlining international data collection and data sharing.

8. Another achievement worth mentioning is the group working on co-ordination of population statistics (PE 4.11), which is reflected for the first time in this yearly document, seems to be making progress even though it is still classified in section III.

II. AREAS THAT SEEM TO BE WORKING WELL

PE 2.6, Regional statistics: Eurostat prepares data for OECD's rural development programmes concerning EU countries.

PE 3.1, National accounts: Eurostat transmits data on the main aggregates to OECD. OECD transmits annual national accounts data for all OECD countries to UNSD. For the ESA-95 (first transmission in 1999) it will be a consistent questionnaire such that each country fills in only one organisation's questionnaire. IMF and the World Bank will have access to a common database.

Mainly PE 3.1, EU candidate countries: The European Union needs extensive amounts of data in all domains for the accession negotiations. Eurostat and ECE have reached an agreement to use ESA-95 questionnaire as a joint questionnaire to collect National Accounts data for the eleven candidate countries. Similar arrangements are expected in 1998 in other domains. *[Moved from part IV to part II].*

PE 3.2, Financial accounts: Data are sent in CUB.X format to Eurostat for checking and redistribution to other parties.

PE 3.2, Monetary indicators: There is co-operation among Eurostat, OECD and IMF. Eurostat gets a copy of what the others receive.

PE 3.2, Balance of Payments: Annual direct investment and international trade in services statistics are covered by a joint Eurostat/OECD questionnaire. Countries are asked to transmit data simultaneously to OECD and Eurostat. In future the EU balance as calculated by Eurostat might be used by OECD in order to avoid divergent figures caused by differing estimation and correction procedures.

PE 3.2, Foreign direct investments: Joint OECD/Eurostat questionnaire on foreign direct investments; and Joint IMF/OECD Survey of Implementation of Methodological Standards for Direct Investments. *[Moved from part IV to part II].*

PE 3.3, Merchandise trade statistics: Eurostat, OECD and UNSD are trying to move towards common sourcing of commodity trade data to eliminate duplication in collection and processing and to improve the comparability of the data maintained by the three organizations. A jointly prepared proposal is that: (i) OECD and UNSD would take Eurostat-processed data for the five European countries that have ceased collecting intra-community imports on a country of origin basis; (ii) UNSD would take OECD-processed data for other OECD countries; and (iii) UNSD would continue to collect and process data for all other countries and make them available to Eurostat and OECD. A joint Eurostat, OECD, UNSD

progress report will be prepared for the next meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Trade Statistics. **[Moved from part IV to part II]**.

PE 3.4, Transport: Eurostat, ECE and the ECMT established together a glossary on transport statistics. That was the first step in the preparation of a common annual questionnaire which was used for the first time in 1995. Work is presently being done to try to provide Member countries with electronic versions of the questionnaires instead of the actual hard paper copies. The three organizations circulate between them the questionnaires and eventually the corrections that they receive from the member countries.

PE 3.9, Purchasing Power Parities: There is close collaboration between Eurostat and OECD. Eurostat passes results to OECD. ECE, OECD and Eurostat co-operate in the European Comparison Programme.

PE 3.10, Industry Statistics: Well-functioning co-operation between OECD and UNIDO on Industrial Structure Statistics. Completely harmonized questionnaire, country specialization (respective OECD member countries and other member countries) and data sharing.

PE 3.10, Agriculture: OECD receives data on Economic Accounts for Agriculture (EAA) for the EU countries from Eurostat. Eurostat will also collect EAA data for the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) and make these data available to the OECD. In the meantime, Eurostat receives EAA data for the CEECs already available at the OECD. Eurostat receives EAA and agricultural key indicators for Commonwealth of Independent States from OECD. The IWG.AGRI is currently exploring ways to reduce response burden by NSOs and to eliminate duplication of requests (FAO, ECE, Eurostat, OECD).

PE 3.12, Energy: Countries are sent common questionnaires for Natural Gas, Oil, Electricity and Heat and Solid Fuels (from 1997) and are asked to transmit copies of completed questionnaires to ECE, IEA (OECD), Eurostat and UNSD. This practice may be extended to Renewable Energy Sources.

PE 3.13, Innovation survey: Eurostat's questionnaire is designed according to OECD standards. **[Moved from part III to part II]**

PE 4.7, Crime statistics: Centre for International Crime Prevention carry out work on the development, organisation, management, analysis and dissemination of the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Data from the five surveys are available via the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network (UNCJIN) at Internet address: <http://www.ifs.univie.ac.at/~uncjin/wcs.html>. More than 100 countries and territories responded to the Fifth survey. In the last quarter of 1998, the Sixth Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems will be distributed to Member States for completion. Data received from the Survey will

be incorporated into the ongoing database activities of the Centre, namely UNCJIN, the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) will continue its involvement in the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) . It has reached its third round in 1996-97. All together, 58 countries across the globe participated in any one sweep of the ICVS. While the participation of the industrialised European countries is constant, the number of countries in transition increased from 1 in 1989 to 7 in 1992-94 to reach 20 in 1996-97. The fourth "sweep" of the project envisages data collection in the first months of the year 2000.

UNICRI is also involved in the drafting of a World Organized Crime Report , which will include identification of relevant indicators for data collection and analysis.

Mainly PE 4.10, Salary adjustments for international officials: Eurostat pools data with OECD (SIO) and UN (ICSC).

PE 4.12, Human settlements: The Human Settlements Statistics Questionnaire 1992 was jointly developed by the Statistics Division of the United Nations and Statistics Programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Data for over two hundred countries and more than three hundred cities were collected and published in the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics 1995.

PE 4.10, Unemployment: As agreed in 1994, monthly unemployment rates in EU Member States are calculated by Eurostat using an agreed methodology; the same figures are then disseminated by Eurostat and OECD. Timeliness still presents a problem but it is hoped that this will be resolved in the near future. **[Moved from part III to part II]**

PE 5.3, Environment: Eurostat has been co-operating with OECD in the collection, treatment, analysis and publication of data via the bi-annual joint questionnaire on the State of the Environment since 1988. A second, more recent joint questionnaire with OECD is the Pollution Abatement and Control Expenditure questionnaire. The data quality of received questionnaires is dealt with by OECD and Eurostat. As from 1998 the data collection will be rationalised, using electronic questionnaires, which allows simultaneous data transmission to OECD and to Eurostat. Eurostat operates a full data sharing policy with the European Environment Agency. ECE collects data for compliance monitoring of conventions, but has no direct co-ordination with other organizations.

III. AREAS WHERE THERE ARE PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED

PE 2.6, City statistics: UNCHS (Habitat) developed a city data questionnaire in 1993 as an output under its City Data Programme (CDP). This questionnaire was revised and used for data collection in cities with a population over 100,000 (3,600 cities worldwide) in the context of the Large Cities Statistics Project (LCSP). The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Network on Urban Research in the European Union (NUREC), the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the International Statistics Institute (ISI) collaborated in this project. Problems to be resolved are largely in the area of harmonization and standardization of definitions and classifications at the city level.

PE 3.7, Tourism: Eurostat works in close co-operation with the OECD and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). A study on common collection of information between Eurostat and OECD was initiated in the beginning of the 1990's and a common questionnaire was drawn up. However, this was not implemented because of the EU Council Directive on tourism statistics, which imposes a new and different collection system and procedures. In 1997, when the new information system on tourism became operational, the discussion with the OECD and the WTO was re-initiated and a revised version of the previously developed questionnaire has preliminary been set up. The on-going work focuses on the refinement of this questionnaire, data exchange and transmission procedures and other details on how to put this action into practice.

PE 3.8 and 4.1, Insurance Services: Efforts for Eurostat and OECD to combine data collection have not yet proved to be successful. The forwarding of a large proportion of data would be easily feasible.

PE 3.13, Research and Development - Human Resources: OECD and Eurostat have a joint questionnaire. Eurostat collects for EEA countries, OECD for the rest. This does not work well because some countries are not answering. Also data is not comparable as not all countries are using the standard classification (ISCO).

PE 4.1, Social protection statistics: OECD collects data on social expenditure from the countries not belonging to the European Union; data for EU member states based on ESSPROS methodology are transmitted by Eurostat. If a protocol on data exchange between Eurostat and OECD can be established in the near future, this may assist the two organisations in using the same standards.

PE 4.6, Health: Information about coordinated data collection by WHO, OECD and Eurostat to be investigated. Information about co-ordinated data collection by WHO, OECD and Eurostat to be investigated. A report is to be presented to the next CES Bureau meeting. Informal agreements exist, such as for improvement of data collection, harmonised data collection and analysis, the use of common instruments, mutual exchange of data of common interest. The role of other EC services should also be taken into account.

PE 4.8, Education: Joint Eurostat/OECD/UNESCO questionnaire for the last 10 years but organizations still verify data independently. Eurostat could be given responsibility for EUR-15 and OECD for its other members.

PE 4.11, Population: Progress continues to be made by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Social and Demographic Statistics in identifying potential ways of co-ordinating and harmonising the collection and dissemination of demographic statistics, in particular to reduce the burden on NSIs but also to lead to greater statistical consistency in outputs. International migration statistics have been collected for several years through a UN-ECE/UNSD/ Eurostat combined questionnaire. In 1997, a Council of Europe summary report on the demographic situation in each country was used as the starting point for a similar Eurostat request, and there are plans for a combined Council of Europe and Eurostat request for some early demographic indicators for 1997, and a combined "Rapid report" publication.

The work is steered by an inter-secretariat group comprising UN-ECE, Council of Europe, Eurostat, UNSD and OECD. A report containing proposals has just been produced by David Pearce from the Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom. The document outlines what demographic information is collected by each international organisation, the timetables and media used and some information on products and databases. The proposals range from producing a catalogue of the outputs and databases and how they can be accessed including the Council of Europe needs in the merged migration statistics questionnaire to recommending a co-ordinated data collection of demographic statistics, with a target implementation date of 1999. Consultation on the proposals will continue in 1998 and early 1999. Eurostat financed the first phase of the project, which ended in 1997. The ECE Statistical Division is financing the consultancy in the second phase (1998), and it is anticipated that UNFPA and the Council of Europe will finance the consultancy in the final phase of the project (late 1998-mid 1999).

This projet is expected to lead to a major improvement in the coordination of data collection by the major international organizations in the field of social and demographic statistics, if the organizations can agree to the proposals put forward by the Consultant and the Working Group.

IV. FUTURE ACTION

Mainly PE 3.1, Transition countries: ECE, OECD and Eurostat have, for some time, been collection data from transition countries in a number of domains: ECE collects macroeconomic data (national accounts, prices, wages and salaries, retail trade, foreign trade, employment and unemployment, and fiscal statistics) from all transition economies in central and eastern Europe including the CIS, mainly for economic analysis purposes; OECD has been collecting, validating and

publishing data from the transition countries since 1991 (published in the quarterly "Short term economic indicators. Transition economies"); Eurostat has a database on key indicators and has recently extended its requirements for macro-economic data from those countries that are candidates for accession to the EU. The timing of the provision of data is also seen to be a problem. In 1996, OECD and ECE started work on eliminating duplications with the aim of agreeing on further joint data collection. This co-ordinated effort will also include Eurostat. Eurostat is starting collection of data from Russia during 1998, based on an agreement between Eurostat and Goskomstat. Gradually Eurostat will collect data on external trade from all the CIS countries. In doing so Eurostat will consult other organisations so as to avoid overlap.

PE 3.2, Foreign Direct Investment: possible Eurostat joint publication with Eurostat/UNCTAD, thus relieving UNCTAD from collecting data from EU countries.

PE 3.6, Trade in Services: Joint Eurostat/OECD classification has been finalised and is being implemented. Data sharing to be investigated. Joint OECD/Eurostat Questionnaire on the Activity of Domestic Firms and of Foreign Affiliates in the Service Sector (results should be consolidated during the first half of 1998).

PE 3.8 and 4.10, Value added and employment in service industries: OECD and Eurostat have separate data collections in this area. The objective is to draw up a joint coherent set of data requests for EEA countries, integrating OECD's requirements with those based on the new EU regulation on annual business surveys and relevant for the service industries.

PE 3.10, Forestry: The Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Statistics has worked on a joint FAO/ECE/EUROSTAT annual forest products questionnaire, intended to avoid all duplication and reduce reporting burdens from countries; the data will be distributed between the three organizations. The system may be extended to include other organizations.

PE 3.10, Agriculture (other than EEA): Because of OECD's growing interest in non-member countries, beyond the traditional transition countries, OECD will investigate with Eurostat and the FAO, whether more synergies in data collection are possible, and where differences remain, identify causes to see how valid the reasons for these are.

PE 3.10 and 5.1, Agri-environment indicators: Eurostat is participating in OECD work-groups. Definition of indicators will be developed shortly, together with a questionnaire which is likely to be joint.

PE 3.11, Short-term industrial indicators: Pilot phase for closer co-operation and joint data collection between OECD and Eurostat was launched in 1997. Cooperation with UNSD to be investigated.

Mainly PE 3.11 and 3.13, Information Society Statistics: Questions of co-ordination (including possible joint data collection) was examined at the 1st meeting of the OECD Information, Computer and Communications Policy (ICCP) Committee's statistical panel in June 1997.

PE 3.13, Research and Development Statistics: So far co-operation in this area has worked well. Co-ordination of possible joint data collection between OECD, Eurostat and UNESCO was discussed at the meeting of the OECD Group of National Experts on Science and Technology Indicators in June 1997.

PE 3.XX, Business statistics: Business statistics in services could be considered as a future action, in particular with regard to the horizontal statistics on services enterprises. The same should be done for the detailed statistics on distributive trade.

PE 4.11, Demographic statistics: Improved co-ordination in data collection among Council of Europe, ECE Population Activities Unit, Eurostat, UNSD and possibly OECD, and investigation of possibilities of developing a joint questionnaire for use by all the organizations (see related entry in Section III above).

PE 5.1, Eco-industry: OECD and Eurostat are developing common definitions and classifications. This may result in future joint data collection.

PE 5.3, Eco-taxes: A recent project being developed jointly: Eurostat, OECD and the European Commission's DG XI and DG XXI.