

INTER-SECRETARIAT WORKING GROUP ON PRICES STATISTICS

MINUTES OF SECOND MEETING (Geneva, February 1999)

Attendance

On the invitation of the ECE, the second meeting of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Prices Statistics (IWGPS) was held on 11th February, 1999 in ECE, Geneva. The following international organisations participated at the meeting: OECD, IMF, World Bank, Eurostat, ECE and ILO. In addition the meeting was attended by Mr.Fenwick from UK in his capacity as chairman of the Technical Expert Group (TEG-CPI). A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Young of the ILO. The draft agenda was adopted unamended.

Agenda Item 2: Introduction

In his introduction, the Chair gave an overview of the decisions made at the first meeting of IWGPS, Paris, September 1998 and subsequent developments arising from the ECE-ILO-OECD secretariat meeting, Geneva, December 1998.

Agenda Item 3: The role of TEG-CPI

TORs

The role of the TEG-CPI was discussed on the basis of the proposed Terms of Reference (TORs). These TORs were adopted as general guidelines for the work of the group.

Editorship

Agreement was reached that a strong expert editor should be nominated in order to ensure consistency of the chapters and avoid repetitions, contradictions and disagreements that may appear. The role of the editor will also include technical aspects relating to the revision of the manual.

After some discussions, it was decided that Mr Peter Hill be offered the position of editor.

It was agreed that in the first few months the editor will work full time, to ensure speedy progress on the revision of the manual.

TEG-CPI, which could be seen in large part as a sub-set of the Ottawa Group, will be responsible for keeping the Ottawa Group informed about all activities relating to their work. Also, TEG-CPI could directly involve other members of the Ottawa Group in their work as and when necessary. The Ottawa Group will be invited to play a key role in commenting on the draft manual.

Agenda Item 4: The creation of a reference group to TEG-CPI

The draft text of the manual will be sent to selected experts, including any from transition or developing countries, for comments and suggestions. ILO indicated that it will inform member countries about the revision process and coordinate communications with the selected experts.

In addition to this, it was noted that the ILO/ECE meeting in November, would be a very good opportunity for getting useful feedback from a representative sample of potential users on those texts that will be available by then.

In order to make the process worldwide, a proposal for making all relevant documents accessible in a Web site was accepted.

Agenda Item 5: Proposed outline for the CPI manual

Discussions of this item on the agenda ended in the following conclusions:

- the outline should be further elaborated by the TEG-CPI;
- the manual will provide guidelines, not standards;
- the manual should be mainly aimed at those compiling CPI, i.e. practising statisticians. Bearing in mind however the fact that in the last few years CPI has generated a lot of public discussion, the manual should, as well, be targeted at the users of CPI.

It was decided that the first priority in writing the manual will be to prepare a Glossary of terms that would ensure coherence in the terminology used and avoid misunderstanding. TEG-CPI should ensure that this is done before any other writing starts.

Concerning the conceptual framework of the manual it was agreed that the manual should cover CPI as an inflation measure as well as a cost of living index.

The CPI manual is structured so that there will be similarity with other manuals on price statistics. Moreover, especially for the first few chapters, it may be possible to have the same texts in the CPI manual repeated in these other manuals. Both writers and the editor should at all time have this objective in view.

Agenda Item 6: Parallel work on a manual for PPI

It was proposed that IMF, in a similar way to the action taken by the ILO with respect to the revision of the CPI manual, should send out official letters inviting interested international organisations to participate in the production of a manual on PPI within the framework of IWGPS.

It was acknowledged that membership of IWGPS was at the organisation level and so the representative of any organisation at a meeting will depend on the topics for discussion at that meeting. In this way it was noted that the framework

of IWGPS could accommodate the production of other price statistics manuals if, and when, the relevant statistical authorities of the different organisations so authorise this.

The IMF will organise the constitution of a Technical Expert Group on PPI as soon as a response to their invitation is received. To this end, the IMF may propose nominees for this group in consultation with the relevant interested organisations and, possibly, some national statistical offices.

It was observed that a large part of the work on the CPI manual will be directly transferable to a PPI manual and so, to this extent at least, the work on both manuals are closely linked.

Agenda Item 7: Work plan for IWGPS

The meeting noted that by August 1999 the TEG-CPI should provide to the IWGPS:

- a more detailed outline;
- a glossary of terms;
- a conceptual framework of the manual.

Also, TEG-CPI will submit a progress report on the revision of the manual to the IWGPS by late summer 1999.

The aspiration is to have the revised CPI manual by January 2001.

Agenda Item 8: Financial support from IWGPS members for writing the CPI manual

Each organisation indicated as follows the likely financial resources that could be available for the exercise over the next two years:

ECE	\$20,000
Eurostat	\$30,000
ILO	\$18,000 + printing costs
IMF	\$30,000
WB	\$15,000
OECD	Only staff resources in 1999. No information is available yet for 2000.

It was decided that each organisation should confirm as soon as possible its financial contribution for the period 1999-2000. The decision on the actual management of the funds will be taken after the receipt of some information to be provided by Eurostat.

Agenda Item 9: Any other business

No other business.

Agenda Item 10: Next meeting

It was decided that there is no need to have scheduled meeting for IWGPS. Its role is more policy oriented and problem-solving and so it should meet only if there are some problems. Otherwise, all communications should be done by electronic means.

As such there will be no formal meeting in Reykjavik, in August 1999, but, if most of the IWGPS members are at that meeting, they can meet informally if necessary.

Another meeting may be held back-to-back with the ILO/ECE meeting on CPI in November 1999.