STATISTICAL COMMISSION and   **WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE   **REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint ECE-WHO Meeting on Health Statistics
(Rome, Italy, 14-16 October 1998)

SESSION III: Development and use of health output indicators

HEALTH FOR ALL
ASSESSING REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN HEALTH STATUS WITHIN SWITZERLAND

Supporting paper submitted by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office[1]

Summary

1.   The assessment of regional variations in health status is an important aspect of equity in health and of particular interest in a federal country where major public health competences are located at the regional level (cantons in Switzerland). Health status is described by both mortality measures (main causes of death) in the population aged 0-64 years and morbidity indicators (rates of disability pensioners) in the same age group. In addition to the comparison of mortality and morbidity rates between cantons an «index of dissimilarity» (described by Kunst and Mackenbach) was used. For both criteria, changes over a time period of 10 to 12 years were considered.

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2.   Results show decreasing trends of mortality from all and main causes of death in both sexes. While this tendency goes along with decreasing dissimilarity as to male overall mortality, the corresponding female dissimilarity index (DI) increases, indicating an increase in inequity between the cantons. A similar pattern is observed as to morbidity : although rates of disability pensioners went up for both sexes, this increase resulted in a lower DI-value for men but a higher one for women. The results are discussed on the background of socioeconomic differences (e.g. unemployment) between the cantons studied.