



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

CES/2004/3
6 April 2004

Original: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty-second plenary session
(Paris, 8-10 June 2004)

**PROGRAMMES OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE ECE
REGION: AN INTEGRATED PRESENTATION**

Introduction and review of recent and future developments

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

PURPOSE OF THE INTEGRATED PRESENTATION

Historical background

1. The Integrated Presentation (IP) is a unique document that has been crucial in the achievement of effective coordination of international statistical work in the ECE region. Its purpose is embedded in the terms of reference of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and the objectives that the Conference agreed upon in its 1991 plenary session and reaffirmed in 2002, namely:

- to improve national statistics and their international comparability;
- to promote close coordination of the statistical activities in Europe of international organizations;
- to respond to any emerging need for international statistical cooperation arising out of transition, integration and other processes of cooperation both within the ECE region and between the ECE region and other regions.

2. It is obvious from the above that the key mission and responsibility of the Conference is to coordinate the statistically related work that international organizations undertake in the ECE region. The Integrated Presentation has been a good tool to enable or facilitate the Conference and its Bureau in their implementing this responsibility in an efficient and productive way. It has also served as the programme of work of the Conference and the ECE secretariat.

3. The Integrated Presentation was introduced a decade ago, at the beginning of the 1990s, and has been prepared annually ever since. The initiative was stimulated by a number of events and a general

perception that the statistical activities of international agencies were insufficiently coordinated.

4. It started as an integrated presentation of the work of the three biggest international statistical agencies in Europe: Eurostat, UNECE and OECD. The IP now incorporates the programmes of about 25 other agencies, including the CIS-STAT and other organizations that impact on the ECE region, and almost all of the world-level organizations.

5. It is mainly forward looking, concentrating on future work rather than past achievements. The IP is unique in that the work programmes are brought together and presented under about 50 headings and is in a format that enables the goals and planned activities to be monitored and coordinated.

6. The IP evolves all the time. Its content, and the way it is used and presented, is further developed year by year. Since June 2003, the IP is publicly available in a database format. It is a free online database available on the ECE website at: <http://unece.unog.ch/IntPres/>. The database will be developed further in order to improve its user friendliness and most importantly to allow for remote updating by the contributing organizations. An excerpt of the IP database is produced as a printed document (CES/2004/4) for submission to the annual plenary session in the three official ECE languages.

Preparing the Integrated Presentation

7. The final IP document of about 250 pages that has been presented to the plenary sessions of the Conference of European Statisticians each year, including 2003, was split into seven documents, comprising an introduction to the IP and six addenda for each statistical area identified in the IP. In 2003 one more addendum was added to present the planned statistical activities of the other UN Regional Commissions.

8. The preparation of the IP requires a lot of work and time, especially by the ECE secretariat, which is responsible for the update, but also by the two main contributors, Eurostat and OECD. However, the process of preparing the IP has been useful in itself. Putting the IP together enables the international agencies to see for themselves exactly who is planning to do what in their area or related areas of work.

9. There are broadly two phases of the preparation of the Integrated Presentation before it is formally tabled at the CES plenary sessions. The first phase involves the **international agencies** (about 25) that submit their programmes to the ECE secretariat to be assembled in the course of January each year.

10. The second phase involves the detailed review of the IP by the Bureau. The plenary session of the Conference has not had the time to discuss in detail the information presented in the IP – that is, to review the meetings and other activities in about fifty 'Programme Elements'. Therefore, the review of the IP was delegated to the Bureau of the CES at its regular February meetings, which results in defining the 'standard headings' for each statistical activity described in the section below on Current structure of the IP. The aim is also to identify apparent overlaps and gaps and to try to ensure that the work of the agencies is relevant to the needs of the countries they are intended to serve. In this work, the Bureau is assisted by designated Rapporteurs (from countries or agencies) for each Programme Activity (six) or Programme Element (48 in 2003 IP). A timetable ensures that all programme elements are reviewed in depth every two years. In 2004, the Bureau reviewed Programme Activity (PA)3: Economic statistics and PA 5: Environment statistics and environmental accounts. The Rapporteurs in the respective areas, who are normally specialists in the relevant field, are asked to analyse the issues and to make recommendations to the Bureau. Since 2001, some of the Rapporteurs' reports are made available to members of the CES.

The use of the IP

11. The use of the IP can be summarized as follows:

- the IP is a useful tool for international statistical coordination: most of the IP functions are fulfilled during the various phases of preparation;
- the IP provides an almost complete description of international statistical work that might impact on the ECE region; it provides evidence of success in coordination in most cases, but it also provides evidence of areas that require attention or revisiting;
- the IP is a very useful reference document - a coherent catalogue of almost all planned work in international statistics. Since 2003, issue of the IP is enriched with an additional addendum presenting the statistical work of all UN Regional Commissions;
- the IP can be used by countries as a reference tool: anyone in a national statistical office or elsewhere who needs to know what is happening, for example in the field of prices (called a programme element in Economic Statistics), can do so easily and quickly by referring to the economics statistics part of the IP. This function of the IP has been significantly strengthened by converting the IP into a database.

12. There is an additional positive aspect of the IP. It is recognized by high-level observers outside the field of statistics as an outstanding and unique achievement. Often it has been given as a good example of international cooperation and coordination.

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE IP

13. At present, the Integrated Presentation is divided into six major work areas ("Programme Activities") and they are in turn sub-divided into a total of 48 Programme Elements as follows:

- Programme activity 1 covers issues concerned with the general management of the programme of work of the Conference, issues of statistical policy that are of direct concern to Heads of NSOs, and issues such as international coordination, technical assistance in statistics and relations with countries outside the ECE region;
- Programme activity 2 deals with substantive cross-cutting issues (including the managerial aspects of such issues) of concern to NSOs, which do not relate to a specific subject-matter field of statistics (e.g. issues of information technology with relation to statistical work);
- Programme activities 3, 4 and 5 which address economic statistics, social and demographic statistics, and environment statistics respectively. Each of these programme activities addresses conceptual issues, standards, collection, production, dissemination and analysis of statistical data arising in their domains;
- Programme activity 6 covers the coordination of international data collection, the work of the secretariats in disseminating statistical data, and other statistically-related activities. It is limited to the activities of the ECE secretariat.

14. The following **standard headings** are used within each programme element:

- **Goal:** Broad aim of national statistical offices for international work in that field over the next several years.
- **Issues and problems:** Issues and problems of concern to national and international statistical offices that countries consider should receive priority attention from international statistical offices.

- **Strategic medium-term objectives:** Specific outputs expected by countries in the medium-term future (3 years or longer).
- **Expected outcomes:** Specific outputs expected in the next two years as a result of international statistical work in each field of statistics.
- **Attention of the Conference is drawn to:** List of issues in each field of statistics that the Bureau of the Conference considers should be brought to the attention of the Conference at the plenary session.
- **Decisions recommended by the Bureau to the Conference:** List of proposed decisions on its programme of work that the Bureau recommends the Conference to take at the plenary session.
- **Meetings in the next two years:** Sponsoring agency, title, location, date.
- **Rapporteur:** International organizations that are assigned the responsibility for preparing short issue-oriented reports for the Bureau and for assessing progress towards the objectives and outputs specified for a programme element.
- **Activities of...:** Description of the major activities of agencies in each field of statistics in the period covered by the IP. Information is also given in this section on **ECE resource implications** for the work to be carried out by the ECE secretariat. The resource implications are classified as follows: minimal (less than 6 work months); moderate (between 6 person-months and 2 person-years); and substantial (two person-years or more).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The 2004 edition of the Integrated Presentation

15. The following issues related to the 2004 edition of the Integrated Presentation should be noted:

- The full Integrated Presentation is not reproduced in a printed document (an introduction to the IP and six addenda), as was the case in previous years, since it is now available in a database format on the ECE website;
- An Excerpt of the IP of 95 pages is produced and available in English, French and Russian similarly to 2003 (document CES/2004/4);
- Planned statistical activities of the other UN Regional Commissions are presented as an addendum to the IP excerpt CES/2004/4;
- Comments submitted by countries on the full Integrated Presentation based on an electronic consultation are presented in a separate document. Prior to the 2001 plenary session, after the Conference had reviewed the selected programme elements for in-depth review, some time was reserved to permit the Conference to review the 40 or so remaining Programme Elements in a more general manner. Since 2001, only a brief period of time was allocated at the plenary session for this review. Therefore, as in 2003, the ECE secretariat will consult electronically in advance the members of the Conference for comments on the full Integrated Presentation by e-mailing the full text to them. The results of these consultations will be presented in document CES/2004/5. The issues raised by countries will be reviewed by the Bureau at its meeting immediately prior to the plenary session and the Bureau will decide whether any of those issues warrant being brought to the attention of the Conference during the plenary session. This approach is being used to ensure that the Integrated Presentation can be dealt with at the plenary sessions in an efficient and effective manner;
- Planned statistical activities of the ECE secretariat that are part of the IP are presented in a separate document as the Annual Statistical Programme of the ECE (CES/2004/6).

Review of the procedure for compiling and updating the IP

16. During the last two years, both countries and secretariats of the international organizations have questioned the usefulness of the IP and its value added, given the substantial cost of its preparation and maintenance. One of the main criticisms has been that the IP is burdensome for the international agencies that contribute to it, especially Eurostat and OECD. It also represents a lot of work for the ECE secretariat, which has to assemble the whole IP and produce two versions of it (pre-plenary and post-plenary).

17. The second criticism is that, as the CES plenary session spends so little time on the IP now, perhaps it has outlived its usefulness. In 2003, for example, the Conference took just an hour to review two topics (programme elements of the IP) - Crime statistics and Statistics on families and households. In 2001 and 2002, no formal discussion was scheduled for any of the 50 or so programme elements.

18. In view of the above, in 2003, the ECE secretariat proposed to the Bureau to review the procedure for compiling and updating the IP. Both Eurostat and OECD supported the proposal. Since the secretariats of the three organizations are confronting resource constraints, it was proposed that the IP be updated on the basis of the Annual Statistical Programmes of these organizations. It should be noted, however, that the IP and the three Annual Statistical Programmes (ECE, Eurostat and OECD) use different classifications of the statistical activities. In view of these discussions, the three organizations agreed on a common approach concerning the review of the procedure for updating the IP and the need for reviewing the classifications of statistical activities. This approach was discussed by the Bureau in February 2004 on the basis of two documents (CES/BUR.2004/37 and CES/BUR.2004/39) that are available on the ECE web site.

19. Furthermore, the Bureau has also agreed to adopt a calendar biennium reporting system in the IP beginning in January 2005. Already for the present 2004 edition of the IP, the information for ECE, Eurostat and OECD refers mostly to one year (2004) since it was taken from the respective statistical programmes for 2004. The complete 2004 statistical programmes for the three organizations are also available on the home page of the IP database.

RELATION BETWEEN THE IP AND THE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME OF THE UNECE

20. The Conference of European Statisticians decided at its 2003 plenary session that an Annual Statistical Programme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe be regularly compiled by the ECE Statistical Division, starting from January 2004, and presented to the Bureau.

21. The CES Bureau endorsed the Statistical Programme of the UNECE for 2004 in October 2003. Therefore, when the 2004 version of the IP was prepared in January 2004, the respective statistical programmes of the three main contributors (ECE, Eurostat and OECD) were used as an input to the IP as agreed between them in advance. This permitted a significant reduction of the burden on the three organizations for the updating of the IP, and at the same time simplified the updating of the database.

22. As a consequence of this decision, the IP in fact incorporates the statistical programme of the UNECE, although the activities are presented in a different order (by programme elements) from the order in which they are presented in the statistical programme. Furthermore, it should be noted that the information for the IP and the UNECE Statistical Programme are stored in the same database, which means that they are updated simultaneously.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTEGRATED PRESENTATION

23. The improvement of the Integrated Presentation is an on-going process, and several changes are expected in the future with regard to the structure of the IP, the procedure for its review and modalities for its updating. As noted earlier, the Bureau of the Conference, in its attempt to streamline the work on the IP, reviewed various issues at its October 2003 and February 2004 meetings (both reports are available on the ECE web site). **The Bureau agreed on the following issues:**

- The IP remains an important and powerful tool, despite the fact that some organizations may make less use of it than others. Greater usage should be encouraged, through its active promotion, while at the same time it should be better adapted to user needs;
- An electronic discussion of pertinent issues amongst CES members should be promoted, with focus on those issues highlighted in the “Attention of the conference is drawn to” section of the IP. Firstly, however, this section should be streamlined to cover only critical issues before its circulation for discussion;
- Starting with the 2005 edition of the IP, the standard headings for each Programme Element should be revised to include only the “Issues and Problems” and “Attention of the Conference is drawn to the following”. The categories “Goals”, “Mid-term-objectives” and “Expected Outcomes” should be discarded;
- The current classification of statistical activities should be reviewed from the point of view of user needs and in terms of facilitating the IP update. A Task Force, composed of representatives of the three main contributors – ECE, Eurostat and OECD – and Statistics Canada (who was involved in the development of the present classification) should review the classification and recommend possible amendments to it to the October 2004 meeting of the Bureau;
- A calendar biennium reporting system on the IP should be introduced beginning in January 2005; the Annual Statistical Programmes of ECE, Eurostat and OECD should be used as input to the IP;
- Ongoing/rolling updating of the IP is not considered feasible. An annual update should take place by mid-January of the year to which the IP refers. Major changes could, however, be corrected mid-year, particularly with regard to meetings and following the discussion at the plenary session of the Conference;
- The process of designating Rapporteurs and the desired structure of their reports should be reviewed. In some areas the NSOs could be involved in the reporting regime, in addition to the international organizations, either as individual Rapporteurs or as active members of the Steering Groups. This would provide a more objective/independent assessment of the work of international organizations and progress made in international cooperation.
- To reduce substantially the number of Programme Elements (PEs) that the Bureau reviews in-depth every year at its February meetings. The Programme Elements (PEs) chosen for in-depth review should be selected from among those that seem the most topical. It is proposed that in October each year the ECE secretariat would recommend the set of PEs (between five and ten) to the Bureau for their in-depth review at the February meetings. Based on this review the Bureau would select the programme element for review by the Conference in June each year. The selection should be made in such a way as to ensure a complete cycle for in-depth review of all Programme Elements within a given period of time;

- The IP database should be further developed by the ECE secretariat to improve its user friendliness and, most importantly, to allow for remote updating by the contributing organizations. With the introduction of the remote updating, the procedure for updating the database may need to be revised;

POINTS FOR DISCUSSIONS

24. Members of the Conference are invited to comment and approve the issues agreed by its Bureau as spelled out in paragraph 23.

- - -