UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION
and
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# 5O YEARS OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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# Foreword

The Conference of European Statisticians is an important Principal Subsidiary Body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. It celebrated its 50th anniversary plenary session in June 2002.

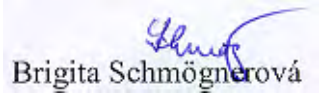
The Conference has achieved a great deal during the past 50 years, and some of these achievements are summarized in the different chapters of this publication.

One of the Conference's major achievements has been the way in which it served as a "bridge" and meeting point throughout the Cold War period for statisticians in Eastern and Western Europe working in the field of Official Statistics. Despite the important differences that characterized market economy countries and centrally planned economy countries and the different approaches they used to measure economic and social phenomena, the statisticians from both groups of countries met regularly in Geneva. Under the auspices of the Conference they discussed and approved statistical standards, exchanged data and collaborated together to improve the international comparability of their national statistics.

The development and adoption by the Conference of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in 1991 and their endorsement by the Economic Commission for Europe in 1992 is another major achievement. The United Nations Statistical Commission also subsequently adopted these Fundamental Principles in 1994 as an international standard at the world level.

The Conference has also made important advances in drawing up different sets of internationally agreed concepts, definitions and classifications and in coordinating international statistical work carried out by the various international organizations working in the ECE region. Tribute is paid in the chapters of this volume to all these and other accomplishments of the Conference.

The publication does not restrict itself to looking into past achievements, for it also discusses some of the important challenges that the Conference of European Statisticians will face in the future. Some of these challenges will undoubtedly be hard to meet, but based on the experience of the last 50 years, I am confident that the Conference will confront them successfully and that it will achieve further impressive successes in the years to come.



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Executive Secretary and Under Secretary-General
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# INTRODUCTION[1]

To attempt to review and summarize post-war history in Europe and North America, even in a selected subject-matter area like official statistics, is a formidable task. Since its birth and the recording of its collective consciousness, humanity has never had to undergo so much profound change in such a short period of time. There is not a single domain that has been immune from these changes. In particular, it has been during the post-war era that we have experienced an exponential increase in the complexity of society. Although these changes have certainly brought many benefits to mankind, they have also brought injustice and misfortune to us, and they have catapulted us towards a new, important and recurring challenge, namely, how to manage complexity, and manage it well. The laws of both cybernetics and statistics teach us that complexity is an extremely difficult phenomenon, for humanity has become a very fragile system which can easily be destabilized at any time by any subset of phenomena, however infinitesimal it may be. Hence, to attempt to recount the history of this recent period and its many disruptions, without having at least some kind of guarantee that it is being seen from a solid and stable point of view, demands not only some courage – but a great deal of modesty too.

Statisticians, in carrying out their roles as objective and independent observers of societies and of their evolution, may perhaps consider themselves as privileged people. However, when they look into the past they should not fall into the trap of letting emotions influence them, or allow themselves to be carried away by their ideologies and beliefs or by any other vested interests, for it is imperative that the rationality of cool and objective judgment prevail. But we must recognize that statisticians are also participants in the society that they are observing. For that reason they must also continually strive to ensure that they are as objective and independent as possible in their interpretation of the events that they are called upon to observe and analyze.

It is against this backdrop that readers must view this account of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) as one of the major regional institutions in the United Nations family. In some ways it is a very modest institution compared to many others, but it is also at the same time a very important institution that has contributed significantly to helping us to understand and deal with the inherent complexities of our modern society. It has also given important stimuli to our search for greater transparency within our societies. These contributions have often been difficult to achieve, especially during the period since the Second World War when the developed world was characterized by two major competing philosophies and views of life. What this review of the work of the Conference during the past 50 years shows very clearly is that the search for truth is an extremely arduous one, and one that is never perfect.

[1] This chapter was written by Carlo Malaguerra (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

This volume is the result of a joint effort of a number of European statisticians who not only lived through and participated in the events that occurred on the statistical stage in the ECE Region during these last few decades, but who also contributed actively to the efforts that were made to strengthen the role played by "Official Statistics" (or Governmental Statistics) in the contemporary era. The eleven chapters that constitute this publication provide insights into many different aspects of the life of the Conference during the past 50 years. Since the Conference is still very much a living entity with a bright future, this book should not be viewed purely as a "history" of the Conference. Rather, it is intended to make a contribution to the 'institutional memory' of the Conference, and to contribute to further contemplation of its changing role in the years to come. This is in keeping with what George Santayana, the philosopher, noted when he said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

The book begins with a contribution from *Tom Griffin* who reminds us that the very deep roots of the CES reach back a long way in time, to the work carried out in the field of statistics under the umbrella of the League of Nations, prior to the Second World War. The statistical work that was carried out then, just like in the post-war period, dealt with the problems and concerns of national statistical experts who grappled with trying to improve the methods, tools and instruments they used in the field of official statistics, in particular with respect to the international comparability of the statistical information that they produced. The work accomplished in that period provided the solid platform upon which the work of the CES was built.

In Chapter 2, *Willem de Vries* puts forward, with elegance and humour, a fascinating analysis of the beginning and future developments of the Conference. He reminds us once more that there have always been represented among the CES membership men and women with clear visions, unshakeable will and solid professional capacities who have served as the real engines of change and development. The constellation of statisticians in the region in the 1950s was very much made up of many individuals like that, and it is thanks to them that the Conference was born and developed so rapidly.

In Chapters 3 and 4 our attention is turned to several different personalities who participated in the life of the Conference during the period when the ECE as a region was characterized by two different political systems, namely, the market economy countries of northern and western Europe and the centrally planned economies of central and eastern Europe. Naturally, this duality also influenced the world and work of official statisticians. In Chapter 3 *Edmond Malinvaud* shares with us his analysis of the period that lasted for almost forty years and that was encompassed by the two "charters" that marked the life of the Conference during that period, the first one serving to codify the Conference's birth and the other serving to define the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Throughout that 40-year period, and within the framework of the CES, statisticians from both west and east always engaged in active dialogue with each other and even developed a spirit of mutual cooperation, collaboration and respect, despite the constraints that they encountered as a result of their membership in the two different and competing political systems. Through their efforts, important advances were made during this period in the international comparability of statistical information for both groups of countries, such as in the field of national accounts. Similar

advances were also made in other fields such as statistical computing and information technology, statistical methodology and the management and organisation of statistical services, and through these advances the Conference developed into a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience between official statisticians working in both groups of countries.

This period in the life of the Conference is also examined in Chapter 4 by *Youri Ivanov* and *Mikhail Korolev*, but this time from the perspective of countries with centrally planned economies. The dialogue between western countries and eastern countries was certainly not facilitated by the general political climate that characterized the cold war period. Nevertheless, they describe how during this period statisticians not only succeeded in cultivating the dialogue that took place among them, but also in developing and strengthening their cooperation. In this way, the CES became a kind of hub or venue for the exchange of knowledge and, in particular, for the dissemination of statistical information concerning both groups of countries. Moreover, the role that the Conference played in the difficult post-war and cold war periods in the exchange of information and in the sphere of general international statistical cooperation, made it easier for the Conference to play an active and leading role in the period that began in the early 1990s when the profound transformation of national statistical institutes of centrally planned economies was initiated.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the general deepening of democratic values across Europe, and with the concomitant growing recognition of the importance of national statistical institutes guaranteeing the transparency of society and how it functions, the community of official statisticians quickly came to understand that it was crucially important for them to codify in the form of a charter-like instrument the important principles that guided them in their work and that served as the very foundation of official statistical information in countries in the ECE region. It is in Chapter 5 that *Jean-Louis Bodin* tells us about the genesis of what ultimately led to the development and promulgation of "The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics" that were drawn up by the CES. He recounts the formulation of the principles, their content and underlying philosophy, their importance and the extent of their reach that goes well beyond the restricted circle of statisticians to encompass the whole fabric of society. Indeed, it is through respect for these Fundamental Principles that citizens of a country are ensured that they have access to reliable statistical information and to data that are objective, widely accessible, and produced by an office or institute that benefits from a legislated degree of independence and scientific autonomy within the country. In some countries in the region, the Fundamental Principles have even grown to come to be viewed as a form of "charter of universal values".

The 1990s were marked by this major process in which the centrally planned economies began to be transformed into market economy systems, and this process has come to be referred to as the "transition period". The countries of central and eastern Europe that were most directly affected by these transformations came to be referred to as "transition countries". This phenomenon was and continues to be unique in history, and it is recounted in Chapter 6 by *Jozef Olenski*. His analysis reminds us that each country had its "transition" and had to solve it in a way that took into account its own unique and specific cultural, political and economic particularities.

The past decade has demonstrated clearly that the “transition countries” have made major efforts to transform themselves in order that they can better respond to the demands of market economy conditions. They have made significant advances towards this goal as a result of both their own efforts and the help and assistance that they have received from western countries and international and supranational organisations, including the CES. As *Vladimir Sokolin* reminds us in Chapter 7, such a profound transformation of national statistical institutes could not have come about without that type of dedication and assistance, and the fact that so much progress has been made towards this goal in such a short period of time is a wonderful example of solidarity on the part of the international statistical community. Indeed, one could even speak here of the statistical “ awakening” that occurred in the 1990s, or of the collective consciousness that is essential for a society to have if it is to apply the rules of democracy and develop a powerful national statistical system that is independent from political power. Such a system can only be conceived within an international context that provides scope for comparing statistical information over time and space.

Chapter 8, written by *James Whitworth,* demonstrates this very clearly. All international organisations active in the field of statistics have endeavoured, particularly during the last decade, to co-ordinate their efforts with a view to improving the quality of the information they produce. Within the region encompassed by the Economic Commission for Europe, the CES became the model par excellence for the organisation, operation and coordination of multilateral statistical programmes. EUROSTAT, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, played a major role in this regard with the important contributions it made to the progress that was made during this time in terms of conceptual infrastructure and in the overall quality of official statistics.

Nevertheless, we must remember that the reinforcement of official statistic as the essential mission of any democratic State is a continuous process that must never weaken. *Paolo Garonna* draws our attention to this in Chapter 9, and to the fact that official statistics are usually considered not only a public good but also a science that allows us to be properly governed. Indeed, not only do official statistics provide many of the crucial facts that allow governments to make rational, informed decisions, but they also provide a scientific method for the decision-making process.

Our society is increasingly confronted with situations of risk and uncertainty. One of the key objectives of development is human security, in all its dimensions, and official statistics must be able to face the challenges that are raised by these new conditions and provide answers to these demands for new information. The trust of our citizens in official statistical information and even in our public institutions requires the existence of national statistical institutes that are independent and that function on the basis of scientific principles. Throughout its history to date, the CES has been called upon to stimulate the thinking of ECE Member States on new questions such as these, that we as practitioners of official statistics are all repeatedly faced with and that we cannot escape.

The history of the CES is also the history of a large number of both well-known and less well-known individuals who in their work as official statisticians contributed to the life and the development of the Conference of European Statisticians as an institution. *John Kelly* in Chapter 10 lists and pays tribute to some of these many individuals who contributed to the CES through the

years, from its beginnings in the early 1950s and extending into the present day. Although such an inventory can never be complete, it serves as a good illustration of the very large number of women and men in national and international statistical offices who, during the last five decades, contributed energy and intellectual thought to the institution and helped to convert the CES into the prestigious body that it is today.

But the CES, in addition to being an institution that has promoted a great deal of statistical development within the ECE region, has also been a forum that has helped statisticians to forge professional collegiality and friendships among statisticians working in the field of official statistics across the region, and around the world. Although none of the chapters of this book is devoted to the impact of the Conference outside the ECE region and its relationships to bodies elsewhere in the world, several of them refer to this aspect of the Conference's history. This is highlighted, among others, by *Lord Moser*, in the last chapter of the publication, where the keynote address that he gave at the fiftieth anniversary plenary session of the Conference (Paris, 10-12 June 2002) is presented. In that address, Lord Moser makes a kind of personal testimony and engages in some profound thinking on the Conference that marked his life and that of many other colleagues in earlier years when he was a member of the Conference. Lord Moser cites several examples of the significant progress that has been made in the field of official statistics by the CES and others over the course of the last 50 years, but he also lists a few examples of some unfinished work and challenges that he thinks the statistical community should try to resolve in the years to come. One of the examples he refers to is the famous proposed "system of social and demographic statistics" that Richard Stone advanced several decades ago, but which has not yet become a reality. Lord Moser concludes that the CES, as well as all those working in the field of official statistics, has a wide range of important and challenging work ahead of it. He stresses that it is important for the community of official statisticians to continue to strive to maintain the confidence of the public in the statistical information that they produce, and confidence in the role their data plays in the preparation of sound governmental decisions.

We hope that this modest work will have a large circulation, and that its readership will extend well beyond the smaller circle of statisticians. We also hope this book will help readers to gain a better understanding of the role played by official statistics in our societies and, of course, of the mission accomplished by the CES for the development and improvement of official statistics, which are an indispensable instrument of any democratic government. This overview of the first 50 years in the life of the Conference of European Statisticians makes two important points very clearly. The Conference has brought together those who work in the field of official statistics so that through dialogue and goodwill they can reach a consensus. But it has also demonstrated that through dedication, professionalism, critical thinking, scientific rationality and rigour, the Conference has succeeded in building a body of solid work for the benefit of all mankind.

# CHAPTER 1

# The League of Nations and the Conference of European Statisticians[1]

## PART ONE: Historical roots of the Conference

### *Summary*

The League of Nations existed effectively only in the twenty-year interlude between the two World Wars. But during its short life span many important international statistical standards were established that are the foundations of those we use today.

The work was led by a small number of national statisticians who were the predecessors of today's members of the Conference of European Statisticians. Some of their names are still familiar to us today. The League's headquarters was the Palais des Nations.

The effectiveness of their work including statistics, and the very existence of the League of Nations then, like the United Nations now, was entirely dependent upon the political commitment of its participating nations.

### *Introduction*

When I took up my job in the Geneva, my room was full of books and papers, the most fascinating of which was an original report of a landmark League of Nations Conference on Statistics dating from 1928. Until I came across that document I had no idea what, if any, significant statistical work the League had undertaken. Subsequent research in the League of Nations library, which is still housed in the Palais des Nations, revealed that the 1928 Conference had led to a series of meetings of national and international statistical experts that continued until the second World War. This chapter describes some of the very important work that they did and its significance for the Conference of European Statisticians that was created soon after the Second World War.

### *Historical Significance*

It is perhaps quite natural to underestimate the pioneering work of our predecessors when we look at the statistical standards and systems that we now have around us. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) has been an effective institution from the very beginning but it did not

[1] This chapter was written by Tom Griffin (see Biographical Notes at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

start from scratch. It inherited the work of many institutions that had preceded it. This chapter is about the very extensive statistical work of the institution that could be described as the "parent" of the UNECE and of United Nations itself. It was pioneering work, and it was undertaken in much more difficult circumstances than we have experienced in the fifty-year history of the CES. Its brief but lively history should have lessons for us today.

### *Some familiar names*

Looking through past reports of statistical meetings of the League of Nations is at once familiar. Some of the terminology is a little different, but the subjects and problems ('challenges' as we might now call them), and even some of the names, are familiar today. R H Coats, whose name is on the Statistics Canada building in Ottawa, was a member of the small but powerful Committee of Statistical Experts. Another member was Corrado Gini. (There was a Lorenz too at the first meeting but he was not Max O Lorenz of 'Lorenz curve' fame.) William Rappard (whose name is on the large office building on Lake Geneva below the Palais des Nations that has housed the World Trade Organisation among others) chaired the conference that launched the League's statistical work in 1928. No doubt many more of the names are familiar to some of today's statisticians. They are listed in the summaries of the meeting reports below. The fact that some of these names are attached to statistical methodology still in use today underlines their place in our heritage. Their similar contribution to important classification systems and statistical standards that we use today is less obvious but no less real.

### *Groundbreaking work*

The statistical work of the League of Nations between the two world wars may truly be described as the foundation of the work of both the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Conference of European Statisticians. The ISI (or IIS as it was called) and others were already doing important work, but this was the first global intergovernmental forum that was intended to set standards for statistical comparability across the whole range of economic and financial affairs and beyond. The work of the League on statistical definitions and classifications was substantial and detailed, and it spanned many fields – most notably foreign trade, industrial production and employment. It also covered consumer and producer prices, energy, housing, agriculture and much more besides. The League's recommendations were addressed to member countries and non-members alike.

The reports summarised below give a flavour of what was accomplished between 1928 and 1939 when the Second World War brought the work to a halt.

### *Other institutions of the day*

Other institutions had already been working in a number of statistical or related fields. These included the International Telecommunications Union (ITU, 1865), and the Universal Postal Union (IPU, 1874), and the International Statistical Institute (ISI, 1885) and FAO (some with

slightly different names from today). Their work was well known to the League participants, and some of those institutions were represented on the various League committees and sub-committees, and they were involved in drafting the various standards.

***The 1928 International Conference***

The meeting in Geneva in 1928 that launched the League of Nations' intergovernmental work in statistics was a major event. The meeting lasted three
weeks, and one or more of the Convention, Protocol and Final Act, were signed by representatives of 40 countries from all regions of the world, with about 75 signatures in all. Not only was the Conference an important political event, but its report was of substance, with significant technical detail. For example, it listed the territories to which the statistics of the foreign trade statistics of each country would apply, and it set out in similar detail the standard questionnaire of the World Agricultural Census. It did substantive work too in other fields as outlined below in the summary of the report of the meeting.

***The Committee of Statistical Experts***

One of the major decisions of the meeting, which was crucial to the continuation of the work, was to establish a Committee of Statistical Experts, composed of about 10 members selected for their technical competence, and not as representing their countries. (This is echoed today in the status of members of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians who are also elected personally and do not act as representatives of their offices or their countries). The Conference had decided on a programme of work that it required the committee of experts to undertake, so the experts always had a remit based upon a Protocol.

Although the 1928 meeting had been attended by delegated from all regions of the world, the Committee of Statistical Experts was composed only of statisticians, essentially heads of national statistical offices, from Europe and North America. The Committee of Statistical Experts met eight times, for a few days each time, over the period from 1931 to 1939. All of the meetings were in Geneva except in 1934 when it met in London immediately before an ISI meeting. The reports of the meetings give a sense of urgency and a commitment to solid progress. And they followed up on their decisions to ensure that the new methods and classifications were being applied.

***Sub-committees***

The Committee of Statistical Experts also set up sub-committees that were chaired by Committee members. The sub-committees, and the Committee itself, arranged the exchange of information on national practices, but they were generally charged with drafting proposals for classification and definitions. The proposals were sent in draft to all countries of the world for comment, and the final results were sent by the Council of the League, with the recommendation

that they apply them, and that they supply statistics based on the standards, to the League secretariat for publication.

The sub-committees could be compared to the CES, OECD or Eurostat working parties of today, or perhaps our City Groups. But their work was generally more fundamental and they seem to have completed most of their tasks quickly.

Some sub-committees were formed at the first meeting of the Committee of Statistical Experts in 1931, and others were formed later. The subjects upon which they were asked to report, or to draft definitions and classifications, included:

- a minimum list of traded commodities;
- a classification of commodities in other fields of statistics;
- standards for price statistics;
- industrial statistics;
- timber statistics;
- tourism;
- finance statistics;
- housing.

The sub-committees usually reported back to the next meeting of the Committee of Statistical Experts. The Committee then agreed a draft to go to countries, and the following year the draft was finalised. Application of the new standards in member and non-member countries was also monitored.

***Conclusion and lessons to be learned***

The League of Nations was a global intergovernmental body. Its membership spanned all continents, and it reached out also to non-members. The USA was not a member but it was very active in the League's work as can be seen from the notes on the meetings below.

It was in many ways similar to the United Nations organisation that succeeded it and inherited its assets. The statistical work undertaken by its members set statistical standards that are the foundations of many of today's world standards. They covered many fields but some, such as international trade, were dominant in their work. They were interested in statistics of aggregate economic activity, and they planned to work on national income accounting. But they were working in an era just before there was to be a recognised system of national accounts which was to become a main focus of the first years of the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Conference of European Statisticians.

The procedures adopted by the League appear very similar to the procedures that we use in the Conference of European Statisticians today. And it appears too that they enjoyed similar success. The environment was different from what we know today. In particular, there was more

basic work to do, and fewer international fora in which to do it, and of course the world was still recovering from its First World War. The shape of the work of the League in statistics seems to suggest that, by the April 1939 meeting of the Committee of Statistical Experts, they were taking stock of their progress. At least, that is one interpretation that can be put upon the report of the final (1939) meeting reported in outline below. At the same time, they continued to make plans, including their intention to turn to national income accounting. Their business was unfinished, but the peace they had enjoyed for such a short time was only going to last a few months longer.

The statistical work of the League of Nations had been substantive and had shown no signs of losing momentum, and their recommendations were being adopted. But, in the end, their work was dependent upon the political environment that was beyond their control. It could be argued that although the League of Nations failed to meet its aim of achieving peace and security, it had some success in achieving international co-operation as evidenced by its statistical work. It is often argued that the League failed because it did not have enough support from countries and, despite its lofty ideals, perhaps because it derived from the vengeful Treaty of Versailles. The history of statistical work in the League of Nations reminds us that, although official statistical work is itself a science, it has to survive in the broader environment of national and international politics.

The League was a global body, but its parental links with the ECE and the Conference of European Statisticians are unmistakable. Not only was the League's headquarters at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and its statistical work done there, but also its most active statistical experts were entirely from Europe and North America. When we look back at the history of the Conference of European Statisticians, and its origins, the League of Nations and its Committee of Statistical Experts provide a fascinating beginning.

The following appendix describes the League of Nations and its statistical work in more detail.

## PART TWO: The League of Nations and the Conference of European Statisticians

### *What was the League of Nations?*

The League of Nations was established in 1919, after the First World War, under the Treaty of Versailles "to promote international co-operation and to achieve peace and security". Its headquarters was the Palais des Nations in Geneva, now the European Headquarters of the United Nations, and the home of the UNECE and the Conference of European Statisticians.

In January 1919, H G Wells published "the Idea of a League of Nations", a paper drawn up by Wells and his friends in the League of Free Nations Association. In the second instalment of the article, in February 1919, Wells and his friends refuted the criticism that the League was a Utopian dream that would interfere with the necessary natural-selection process of war and with the principles of national sovereignty.

US President Woodrow Wilson is generally credited as being the strongest champion of the establishment of the League. It was he who submitted a Draft Covenant for a League of Nations on 14 February 1919 at a Peace Conference in Paris. But when countries signed up in 1920, he could not persuade the US Congress to join; although US representatives did take an active part in some League affairs, including statistics.

Like the UN, the League had an Assembly, a Council and a Secretariat. In some respects the Council resembled the UN Security Council. The number of permanent members ranged from one to five, and the non-permanent members ranged from four to seven

The League of Nations library is still in the Palais des Nations in Geneva, where the papers referred to in this note can be found. None of the documents is yet available in electronic form.

The League ceased its activities after failing to prevent the Second World War. In 1946, the UN inherited its assets, and carried on much of its work.

The International Labour Office (ILO) was also set up under the Treaty as an affiliated agency of the League. Before the Versailles Treaty, some international organisations had already been established, but to deal with very specific international matters. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) was established in 1865, and the Universal Postal Union (IPU) in 1874. Both are in Geneva, near the Palais, and are now UN "specialised agencies".

***What was the role of the League in statistics?***

The substantive work of the League of Nations in statistics was inaugurated in a large international Conference in Geneva in 1928. It was a momentous occasion
that was going to lead to continuous international co-operation until the Second World War intervened in 1939. The Conference involved 40 countries from all continents of the world, and some representatives of international organisations, and it lasted for three weeks. The report of the Conference shows that it had done some major substantive work on classifications, as well as setting a work programme and a procedure that would ensure that the work would be taken forward. The work was led by a relatively small number of active participants, but all member countries, and non-member countries too were consulted on all major issues.

The work was carried on in the League during the 1930s by a relatively small group called the Committee of Statistical Experts, and by a series of sub-committees that reported to the Committee. The reports of the 1928 inaugural Conference and the reports of the Committee of Statistical Experts, are summarised below.

***The 1928 Conference***

In 1928, from 26 November to 14 December, the League held a major meeting called the "International Conference Relating to Economic Statistics". It was under the auspices of the

Economic and Financial Organisation of the League. The report is in English and French in the same document C.606 (1).M.184 (1). 1928. II. The three-week meeting was attended by representatives from the following countries:

| | |
|---|---|
| Austria | W Breisky, E Rothe, R Riemer, J Schmidt |
| Australia | Chapman, A W Flux |
| Belgium | Julin, A Janssen |
| Brazil | Barboza-Carneiro, Albuquerque de Gusmao |
| Bulgaria | Michaykoff |
| Canada | E D'Arcy McGreer, W A Riddell |
| Cuba | G de Blanck, P Pande y Cintra |
| Czechoslovakia | J. Mraz, J Ryba, C Horacek |
| Denmark | Adolph Jensen, J Dalhoff |
| Ecuador | Alexandre Gastelu |
| Egypt | James I Craig, Henein Bey Henein |
| Estonia | Albert Pullerits |
| Finland | Martii Kovero, Werner Lindgren, Rudolf Holsti |
| France | C Colson, Huber, Elbel, Gayon, |
| Germany | Hans Platzer, Ernst Wagemann |
| Greece | D. Bikelas |
| Hungary | Jules de Konkoly-Thege, Alexandre Dobrovits |
| India | D B Meek |
| Italy | Corrado Gini |
| Japan | Nobumi Ito, Nagasawa, Taniguchi, Matsuda, Moroi |
| Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes | Fotitch, Birkovitch, Kostitch |
| Latvia | Charles Duzmans |
| Luxembourg | Charles Vermaire |
| Mexico | Daniel Cosio Villegas, Francisco Trejo |
| Netherlands | H. W. Methorst, L. P. de Bussy |
| Nicaragua | Antoine Sottile |
| Norway | Gunnar Jahn |
| Paraguay | Franz Machon |
| Poland | Szturm de Sztrem, |
| Free City of Danzig | Szturm de Sztrem, Martin J Funk |
| Portugal | Calheiros e Menezes, Chambica da Fonseca |
| Romania | C. Antoniade |
| Sweden | K I Westman, Martin Jansson |
| Switzerland | M W Stucki, J Lorenz, K Acklin |
| Union of Socialist Soviet Republics | Kritzmann, Falkner-Smit, Dvolaitski |

| | |
|---|---|
| Union of South Africa | John Edward Holloway |
| Uruguay | Alfredo de Castro |
| United Kingdom | S Chapman, A W Flux, W G Ferguson |
| USA | E Dana Durand |
| Venezuela | F J Duarte |
| Siam (Observer) | Prince Varnvaidya |

The Protocol was also signed by delegates from the International Institute of Agriculture, the International Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Committee, the Sub-committee of Experts for the Unification of Customs Tariff Nomenclature, and the Organisation of Communications and Transit (M J H F Claessens).

The chairman was William Rappard of Switzerland. The secretariat comprised: A Loveday; V J Stencek; A Rosenborg; J H Chapman and A von Suchan.

The report of the meeting is in three parts. The Convention sets out the Articles that form the summary agreements of the meeting. The Protocol interprets the Convention and includes detailed annexes. The Final Act elaborates upon some of the conclusions in the other two parts of the report.

Article 2 of the Convention, refers to the following "classes" of statistics:

- External Trade;
- Occupations;
- Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries;
- Mining and Metallurgy;
- Industry (including commerce);
- Index Numbers of Prices (wholesale and cost of living);
- Protocol V adds that "careful consideration should be given to the possibility of … amplifying official statistics so as to facilitate the compilation of estimates of national income….". (There was at the time no system of national accounts to bring together statistics of economic activity.)

A short list of statistics that should be collected and published is specified under each heading. The statistics were intended to be internationally comparable.

The contracting parties undertook to exchange statistics between them (Article 9). Some countries reserved the right to vary the requirements in certain cases.

- External trade statistics. A nine-page annex (Annex I) describes in detail the territories to which the statistics of the foreign trade statistics would apply for each country, and provides notes on definitions.

- Fisheries. A short Annex II defines the fisheries statistics to be collected.

- Mineral and Metallurgical Statistics. Annex lll sets out, in three pages, the detail of the statistics to be collected under these headings.

- Census of Industrial Production. Annex IV devotes three pages to describing the data to be collected including the timing and confidentiality aspects.

- Indices of Industrial Activity. Annex V describes, in two pages, describes the products and the industries to be included.

- Agriculture. Annex VI is an eighteen-page report. The standard form of World Agricultural Census schedule is also set out in great detail. It does not include any non-agricultural activities of farms.

Article 8 of the agreement in the report of the meeting, establishes a committee of technical experts to take the work of the meeting forward. Under the protocol adopted at the end of the meeting, the conference declared that the Committee of Statistical Experts should be composed of members selected for their technical competence, and not as representing the countries of which they are nationals. As noted above, this is echoed in the status of members of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians who are also elected personally and do not represent their offices or their country.

The Conference was long, but it was successful. Firstly, it was well attended. It also identified some very important statistical issues, and even offered some quite detailed recommendations. Most importantly it established a Committee of Statistical Experts that could be entrusted with the task of taking forward the work that the Conference had started.

***The Committee of Statistical Experts***

The Committee of Statistical Experts was appointed on 22 January 1931, and it met about once a year until the last meeting in April 1939. Its meetings were always in Geneva except in 1934 when it met in London just before a meeting of the International Statistical Institute (ISI).

Consistent with the notion of not being representatives of their countries, nationalities were not usually given in the reports of the Committee's meetings. But it is evident from the report of the 1928 meeting, that the participants in the first Expert meeting were from what are now UNECE member countries: Canada, USA, UK, Italy, France, Norway, Switzerland, Poland and Germany. The reports do not provide any information on how they were selected, and it is noteworthy that the USA was represented even though it was never a League member.

The Committee's method of work was to make recommendations for standards and definitions where it could. But also to set up sub-committees of specialists, each chaired by a

member of the Committee of Statistical Experts, to make recommendations in fields that required specialist knowledge. The sub-committees included specialists from the statistical offices of member (and non-member governments) and also from other international agencies including The International Chamber of Commerce and the International Institute of Agriculture.

When the Committee of Statistical Experts agreed on a draft, either its own draft or the product of a sub-committee, then it asked the Council of the League to transmit the draft to countries (both members and non-members) for their comments. The drafts were finalised after comments were received, and then the Committee asked the Council to transmit the recommendations to countries once again, this time with the request that the countries adopt the recommendations.

The Committee also followed up on the recommendations and asked countries whether or not they were adopting them or intended to adopt them. Then, as now, the application of international standards was by no means universal, and much greater in some area than in others. The notes below provide some information on the extent to which the new recommendations were adopted.

First meeting. 23 March 1931

The Committee held its first meeting, in Geneva, on 23 March 1931. A full list of members is not given in the report, but the members present were: R H Coats, E Dana Durand, Sir Alfred W Flux, C Gini, M Huber, G Jahn, J Lorenz, E Szturm de Sztrem, E G Wagemann (replaced part of the time by H Platzer) and Valentine Dore (representing the International Institute of Agriculture).

The first meeting of experts spent some time planning its future work. One of its decisions, in view of the "technical character of some of the problems before it", was to ask to be empowered to appoint sub-committees of experts each to be chaired by a member of the Committee of Experts.

The 1931 meeting decided on the "Minimum List of statistical territories" to be specified in the trade statistics of countries. The Committee also requested a sub-committee to prepare a minimum list of traded commodities, taking as a basis the list already drafted by the Sub-Committee of Experts for the Unification of Customs Nomenclature. It further requested the sub-committee to report on the principles which should determine the relationship of the classification of commodities for trade purposes and (a) commodities in other fields of statistics, (b) the classification of industries, and (c) the classification of occupations. The reports were to be communicated to the other sub-committees that were being set up.

A sub-committee was also set up to consider price indices, taking account of the work already done by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) and the International Institute of Statistics (IIS).

- On occupations, the committee decided to ask Mr Huber and Mr Wagemann to report back on the way occupations are defined and classified in their countries.

- On industrial statistics, the Committee decided to set up a single sub-committee to deal with mining and metallurgy, industrial establishments, industrial production and industrial activity.

- On electrical power, the Committee asked the secretariat to provide a paper on the way the statistics are dealt with in different countries.

- The report of the meeting also includes appendices with a list of territories and a short list of traded commodities.

Second Meeting, 7-12 December 1933

The second meeting of the Committee of Experts did not take place until about 20 months after the first. The Committee noted that delays had been caused for "administrative and financial" reasons, but it considered that it should meet at least once a year if it was going to undertake the tasks given to it by the 1928 Convention. It also noted with satisfaction the number of countries that had ratified the Convention. No details are given in the report. It asked the secretariat to investigate to what extent the parties to the convention have adopted its provisions.

The members present were: M A Colombo (replacing C Gini); R H Coats; E Dana Durand; A W Flux, M Huber; G Jahn; H W Methorst (Netherlands) for part of the session; E Szturm de Sztrem: V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture; J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office; M Gayon (France) as a member of the sub-committee on classification of commodities.

- Trade: as the Committee of Experts was "under statutory obligation to report this year" (Article 3 of the Convention) on the results of an experiment in the recording of foreign trade "by country of provenance and destination", it devoted much of this meeting (and much of its report) to that subject. The committee considered reports from 17 countries, all of which are current CES members except Egypt and South Africa.

- Prices, minerals and timber. A smaller part of the meeting was devoted to a uniform base period for price indices, the report of a sub-committee on mineral and metallurgical statistics. The committee also set up a small sub-committee consisting of only three members to consider timber statistics. Gunnar Jahn (of Norway) was chairman. He and R H Coats (of Canada) were selected as nationals of countries whose timber production is important. Mr Dore was selected to represent the International Institute of Agriculture.

Third meeting, 12-14 April 1934

It was attended by: E Dana Durand, A W Flux, C Gini, G Jahn, H W Methorst, E Szturm de Sztrem. V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture. J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office. M Gayon (France) as a member of the sub-committee on classification of commodities. This, the third, meeting was only five months after the second meeting. It was held in London, because most of its members would be there for the meeting of the International Institute of Statistics a few days later. It was the only meeting to be held outside Geneva.

- Trade: it returned to the question of trade statistics. It devoted most of its time to completing a minimum list of 35 basic commodities for trade classifications (given at the end of the report and showing how the detailed customs nomenclature relates to the minimum list). The meeting was timed to enable the Committee to prepare a report on trade classifications for the meeting of the League of Nations Council scheduled for June. (The nearest equivalent to the Council today is the UN Security Council. It had a similar small membership, but it was not so narrowly concerned with security.) The Committee expressed the hope that, following comments from countries, it would be able to deliver a definitive list to the Council at its first meeting in 1935.

The report of the third meeting also records that, at its meeting on 15 January 1934, the Council had decided to: (a) recommend that countries parties to the Convention should record their imports by country of origin; (b) invite other countries to do the same; and (c) authorise the Secretariat of the League of Nations to collect, aggregate and publish the statistics in question. On the assumption that the fifteenth Assembly of the League of Nations would approve the budget, it was expected that the data would refer to 1935 and be published by the secretariat in 1936.

The committee also discussed with the timber sub-committee in its programme of work.

Fourth meeting, 3-6 June 1935

It was attended by: E Dana Durand; A W Flux; C Gini; M Huber; G Jahn;
E Szturm de Sztrem ; V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture;
J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office; M Gayon (France) attended as a member of the sub-committee on classification of commodities.

- Trade: the hope had been expressed at the previous meeting that the Council of the League would consider the Committee's trade classification. The Council did so on 14 May 1934, and decided to send the list, and the accompanying notes, to all member states and also to non-members. (Most of the time of the current meeting was spent on revising the list in the light of comments received. A revised list was annexed to the report).

- Tourism. A special sub-committee was set up to "study only the economic side of the problem in its international aspects". The sub-committee was asked to define a tourist, recommend how best to determine the number of tourists and the duration of their stay, and recommend how to measure their expenditure.

- Compliance with international standards. Seventeen of the twenty-four parties to the Convention of 1928 had responded to a questionnaire on their compliance with the Convention. The results were passed to the relevant sub-committees.

Fifth meeting, 12-17 October 1936

The following members were present: A W Flux (Chairman); C Bruschweiler; R H Coats; E D Durand; M Huber; G Jahn; E Szturm de Sztrem; V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture; J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office. The following associate members were also present: O Anderson (housing); M Gayon (trade); Pulinx, Carl Snyder.

- Statistics of Occupations: the committee referred back to the 1928 conference, and its recommendation that the committee prepare a detailed draft classification of industries and occupations. As the next population censuses were due in 1940 or 1941, the committee decided to spend much of the present meeting on the subject. It concluded, that occupations as such were a national matter. But for international comparisons, it was sufficient to classify occupations according to industry and "personal status". The committee planned to make a more complete report in 1937.

- Indices of Industrial Production: the committee noted that increasing numbers of countries were now compiling such indices. So, it decided that a special sub-committee should prepare work on comparability with the help of some outside experts.

- Mining and Metallurgy: with the help of some technical experts, the committee had drawn up some definitions and classifications for the production of these statistics. They were appended to the report of the meeting. The Council was asked to recommend that member countries adopt them.

- Timber: the committee had made an examination of timber statistics. Before making any recommendations, they decided to ask the Council to permit the Secretary General to undertake an enquiry on some draft recommendations. The committee would then present a final report in 1938 on the basis of comments received.

- Minimum list of trade commodities: the committee noted that 18 countries (all of them except Iraq and New Zealand are members of the current CES) had declared their intention to publish statistics according to the list drawn up by the committee. It was also noted that the Conference of British Commonwealth Statisticians in 1935 had recommended to all its members that they should also comply.

- Auxiliary international trade statistics: the object of these statistics was to secure, with the help of import statistics by country of origin, better data on the flow from producing to consuming countries. The League's secretariat were given the task of collecting and publishing the data. About 30 countries had promised to provide the data for 1935, so it was hoped that the results would be published in the current year (1936).

- Tourism: the Council had asked the sub-committee in 1934 to look into statistical methods, and as usual, the committee had asked a special sub-committee to report. The committee had agreed some general recommendations, and asked the Council to send them to member and non-member states asking them to put the recommendations into affect. They were in appendix II of the report of the meeting.

- Finance statistics: on 13 May 1936, a few months before the present meeting, the Finance Committee of the League had asked the Committee of Statistical Experts (through the Council) to undertake a study of how international financial statistics might be improvised. The committee agreed to establish a special expert sub-committee for this purpose.

- General Regulation on (League) Committees: following a study of committees, the League considered the Committee of Statistical Experts to be "excellently suited to its work" and made no recommendations on it. The appointment of outside experts to sub-committees, and regular contact with national statistical offices could be construed as questionable under the general regulation, but the committee was convinced that the Council would raise no obstacles to these procedures.

Sixth meeting, 19-24 April 1937

Those present: M Huber (Chairman); C Bruschweiler; E Cohn; E D Durand; Sir Alfred Flux; G Jahn; O Morgenstern; E Szturm de Sztrem; V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture; R Guye; J Lindberg and R Woodbury represented J W Nixon of the International Labour Office; J P L Gayon (trade).

- Statistics of the gainfully employed population: as in 1936, the committee returned to occupations in the light of the imminence of the 1940/41 round of population censuses. Much of the meeting was devoted to the subject, and detailed recommendations on definitions and classifications were set out in Appendix 1 of the report. The recommendations were sent to member and non-member countries for their comments.

- Trade in raw materials and food: the first volume of these statistics had been published by the secretariat the previous year (1935).

- Timber statistics: because of the short time since the Council decision to seek Governments' comments on the Committee's recommendations on timber statistics, the Committee decided to postpone discussion.

- Finance and Price statistics: the work was reviewed very briefly.

- Volume of international trade: the Committee noted the importance of these statistics, and the number of countries producing them according to different methods. A Sub-committee was therefore set up to study how the methods could be made comparable.

Seventh meeting, 4-9 July 1938

Those present: M Huber (Chairman); C Bruschweiler; E Cohn; E D Durand; Sir Alfred Flux; G Jahn; E Szturm de Sztrem; V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture; J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office; J P L Gayon attended as associate member for trade statistics; O Anderson attended as associate member or production indices; R Christiani (Denmark) attended for the question of a permanent exhibition of graphs

- Statistics of gainfully-occupied population: this subject again took a large part of the meeting as it had done in the two previous meetings.

- Housing and building statistics: in September 1937, the Assembly of the League had decided that the League should make recommendations concerning statistical methodology in urban and rural housing, and in building statistics including prices of raw materials. The Committee therefore decided to set up another sub-committee. Unusually, the membership of sub-committees mentioned in the report are named in a footnote. In this case it was:
  G Jahn (Norway), M Huber (France) and J W Nixon (ILO). It also included the following experts: V P A Derrick (UK), B Nystrom (ISI), V Sekera (Czechoslovakia) and E Fisher (USA).

- Trade: it was reported that the Committee's "minimum list" was being used, or was about to be used, in 25 countries. All of the countries, except Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Mexico, were European or North American.

- Indices of industrial production: a special sub-committee had prepared guidelines, which were appended at annex IV of the Committee's report. They were intended to be sent to countries for comments. The sub-committee consisted of: Sir Alfred Flux (UK), G Jahn (Norway), Prof. O Anderson (Bulgaria), C Snyder (USA).

- Timber: a special sub-committee that included representatives of the International Institute of Agriculture and the International Timber Committee had submitted some recommendations that had been sent to countries for comments. The sub-committee consisted of: G Jahn (Norway), R H Coats (Canada), V Dore (Int. Inst. of Agriculture), and some external experts: Charles Colomb (France), M Glesinger (International Timber Committee), M Sundin (Sweden), R E Marsh (USA). The Committee's final recommendations were in Appendix V of the report of the current meeting. They were to be sent to member and non-member countries.

- Financial statistics: the work in this field had concentrated on "statistics relating to the formation of capital and the manner in which it is invested". A special sub-committee had been established, and its preliminary report was reproduced as Appendix VI. The sub-committee consisted of Sir Alfred Flux (UK), E Cohn (Denmark), O Morgenstern (Austria), and the following outside experts: E Ackermann (Switzerland), H Clay (UK), J Denuc (France), E Lindahl (Sweden), F Ravizza (International Thrift Institute), W W Riefler (USA), J Vincent (Belgium) and Prof. D Robertson (UK).

- Balance of payments: as the balance of payments spanned so many issues, the Committee expected its study of the subject to be of long duration. It decided to set up a sub-committee to do the work with the assistance of outside experts.

- Permanent exhibition of graphs: in September 1937, the Assembly of the League asked for a permanent exhibition of graphs relating to "current economic and financial conditions". The request was vague, because it was not clear whom they were for, where they should be and what they should depict. The Danish 'Monsted Foundation' offered some assistance. The Committee had a long and inconclusive discussion.

Eighth (and last) meeting, 22-27 April 1939.

Those present: M Huber (Chairman); C Bruschweiler; R H Coats; E Cohn; E D Durand; Sir Alfred Flux; G Jahn; E Szturm de Sztrem; V Dore represented the International Institute of Agriculture; J W Nixon represented the International Labour Office. The following associate members were also present: V P A Derrick (for housing); E Fisher (housing); B Helger (housing); O Anderson (indices of industrial production); and J P L Gayon (trade).

- Housing Statistics: the committee had presented an "international minimum programme for housing statistics" in its last report in 1938. The Council had sent it to member and non-member states in September. The committee had received some comments and had revised the programme at its present session. It noted that rigid application of the programme would not prove practicable in "colonial territories".

- Indices of Industrial Production: the committee's final report was in appendix II of the report of the current meeting. It requested the Council to send the report to member and non-member countries.

- Volume and value of foreign trade: the committee presented its preliminary recommendations in appendix III of their report. The comments of countries were sought.

- Trade – minimum list of commodities: the number of countries adopting the minimum list was up to 31. They were European or North American, plus
  South Africa, Australia, Burma, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, New Zealand and Palestine.

- Employment: seventeen countries had agreed to adopt the Committee's recommendations, or to take them into account in preparing their population censuses. They were from several continents, and included Siam and Turkey, but not the UK, the USA or Canada.

- Timber: eleven countries had indicated that they "contemplated compiling and publishing statistics based on the recommendations of the Committee". The only major timber producers among them were the USA and Sweden.

- Banking: the Sub-Committee on Financial Statistics was drawing up recommendations on banking statistics, and the Committee proposed that the secretariat be allowed to send the recommendations to countries for comment as soon as they were ready.

- National accounts: finally the Committee "decided to include in its programme in the next few years the statistical measurement of national income". Noting that it was in Recommendation V(i) of the 1928 Conference, and that need for "guidance in this matter is being increasingly felt in various countries". As this was to be the last meeting of the committee, they were not able to follow up on this decision. But national income accounting was to become a major preoccupation of the UN and the UNECE and OECD after the Second World War.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Europe: Statistically Significant?[1]

### *Introduction*

This article is about the interactions between the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and other players on the international statistical scene, over a period of 50 years. Restrictions of time and space make it impossible to be comprehensive. Even at the level of the plenary sessions of the Conference (the meetings of heads of national statistical offices), to which I large restrict this overview, the interactions have been numerous. The Conference has always closely co-operated with others. First of all with the United Nations Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistics Division (formerly United Nations Statistical Office) and many specialized agencies of the United Nations (such as ILO, WHO, FAO etc.), including the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and World Bank). Secondly there have been many forms of cooperation with non-UN (regional) intergovernmental bodies, such as Eurostat and the OECD (and their predecessors), as well as non-governmental organisations (such as the International Statistical Institute, ISI). And finally of course, maybe most important, there have been many interactions with countries.

Clearly, the role of the Conference of European Statisticians in international statistical development has been strong (sometimes dominant) from the beginning and probably will continue to be so for some time to come. This is not surprising: the Conference gathers, officially or informally (developed countries outside Europe often participate in the meetings), chief statisticians and experts from all the developed nations of the world. Maybe this prominent role is also a reason why European statisticians tend to believe that the history of international statistical cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations started in Europe, in particular Geneva. This is not true; it actually started in New York. It was the UN Statistical Commission that basically 'created' the Conference of European Statisticians in the sense that it recommended, first of all in Europe, the institution of regional meetings of chief statisticians to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). (The League of Nations, which preceded the UN, did of course have its headquarters in Geneva. See the chapter on the League.)

### *Early meetings of the Statistical Commission*

The Conference has two parent bodies: the Economic Commission for Europe and the Statistical Commission. Historical evidence shows that the Statistical Commission was the first 'parent'. The Commission met for the first time from 1-15 May 1946 in New York. ECOSOC had invited a number of prominent national statisticians from various countries (essentially on a

[1] This chapter was written by Willem de Vries (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

personal basis) to form the so-called 'nuclear' Statistical Commission[2]. They were Rice (USA, chairman), Campion[3] (UK), Mahalanobis (India), Sauvy (France), Lieu (China) and Jahn (Norway). In addition, the Soviet Union, the Ukraine and Brazil had been asked to appoint representatives. Jahn, who had been prominent in League of Nations statistics before the War, and who was in the process of moving over from head of the national statistical office to managing director of the Central Bank of Norway, sent a message that he could not attend, but submitted suggestions in writing. Lieu arrived late and could only attend the last two days of the meeting. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, informed the Secretary-General of the UN that Fedesimov would represent the USSR (temporarily), but Fedesimov also did not arrive before 14 May. Texeira de Freitas from Brazil, finally, declined his appointment for health reasons, but sent his assistant Jardim with greetings.

The Commission met from 1-8 May and then recessed until 14 May to consider a final report that had been drafted by its Chairman and Secretary, on the basis of working papers by experts and members, and with the help of a technical consultant, Rosenberg[4]. Venneman of the Division of Statistical Standards of the United States Bureau of the Budget acted as Secretary. So the first Commission report[5] was essentially the work of two Americans. Both Rice and Venneman were from the US Bureau of the Budget (now: Office of Management and Budget, Statistical Policy Division).

The fairly detailed recommendations that the Commission sent to ECOSOC were about:

- The composition and terms of reference of a permanent commission on statistics of the United Nations;
- The statistical organisation and functions of the UN Secretariat;
- The disposition of existing statistical activities conducted by the League of Nations;
- The general character of statistical relations between the UN and specialized agencies;
- The general character of statistical relations between the UN and other organisations of a quasi-governmental or non-governmental character, including those organised upon a regional basis.

As to the permanent Statistical Commission, the recommendation was to restrict the membership to twelve members, to be appointed (for a term of three years) by ECOSOC 'in their

[2] To be precise: ECOSOC Resolution E/20 of 15-2-46 to establish the Statistical Commission mentions named persons, plus unnamed representatives from Ukraine and the USSR.
[3] Harry Campion, shortly afterwards, became the first (temporary) director of the United Nations Statistical Office, before going back to the national statistical office of the UK.
[4] Head of the League of Nations Mission in the US.
[5] Report of the Statistical Commission to the Economic and Social Council, Document E/39, Journal of the ECOSOC, First Year, No. 17, Friday, 31 May 1946.

individual capacities on the basis of technical competence and professional eminence'. 'Such qualifications', the Commission added, 'should take precedence in any consideration given by the ECOSOC to the desirability of widespread geographical representation and to the representation of subject-matter fields and areas of specialized technical knowledge'. It was added that in the appointment of members account should also be taken of the likelihood of their ability to attend sessions regularly. The wording of the recommendation is very cautious. Clearly, however, the nuclear Commission's idea was that ECOSOC should create a non-political, technical body whose members were not even necessarily representing their governments, and who could reasonably be expected to be able and willing to travel to New York from time to time.

However, ECOSOC had slightly different ideas. In its Resolution of 21 June 1946[6] it decided that ('having considered the report of the Statistical Commission of 15 May 1946') 'The Statistical Commission shall consist of one representative from each of twelve Members of the United Nations selected by the Council'. And 'With a view to securing a balanced representation in the various fields covered by the Commission, the Secretary-General shall consult with the Governments so selected before the representatives are finally nominated by these Governments and confirmed by the Council'. On the other hand it was also decided that 'The ECOSOC may in addition appoint, in their individual capacity, not more than twelve corresponding members from countries not represented on the Commission. Such members shall be appointed with the approval of the Governments concerned'. Clearly, ECOSOC wanted the Commission to be an inter-governmental body. Nonetheless, it has always remained a non-political, technical body. It may even be argued that the Statistical Commission is ECOSOC's only functional commission that has never become politicized.

The Council decided that at its second session the Commission should consist of one representative from each of the following member states: China, The Netherlands, USSR and United States (for two years), Canada, India, Mexico and Ukraine (for three years) and France, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom (for four years). Nine of these twelve countries therefore belonged to the 'realm' of the Economic Commission for Europe[7], so there was no 'widespread geographical representation' indeed. The first regular session of the Commission took place from 27 January to 7 February 1947, and elected the following officers: Marshall (chairman, Canada), Mahalanobis (vice-chairman, India) and Rice (rapporteur, USA). The other countries that attended the meeting were China, France, The Netherlands, Ukraine, USSR and the United Kingdom. Mexico (Saenz) and Norway (Jahn, meanwhile working at the Central Bank of Norway) sent regrets.

It was only during the 3d session of the Commission (26 April to 6 May 1948) that the issue of regional statistical activities was first addressed substantively. The report[8] of the meeting says (paragraph 76) that 'The Commission gave special attention to proposals to provide more adequately for the recognition of statistical problems peculiar to European countries and for the

[6] Document E/76/Rev. 1 and document E/84/Rev.1, paragraph 3.
[7] It should be noted here that the ECE region of the UN covers not only geographical Europe, but also North America.
[8] Document E/CN.3/50 of 11 May 1948.

further implementation among European countries of its own recommendations upon statistical standards'. In other words, the Commission recognized that Europe had statistical problems, including that it did not always follow the standards that the Commission set. Interestingly, statistical problems of other continents were not even considered. The report goes on by saying (paragraph 77) that 'The activities of the ECE and its special interests in the availability of comparable statistics gave particular focus to the Commission's consideration of this problem'. 'In the light of these factors, the Commission recommended to ECOSOC that it request the Secretary-General to encourage and facilitate consultation among representatives of the statistical offices of European governments upon statistical questions' (paragraph 78). Put in more direct terms: please create a body such as the Conference of European Statisticians is today. So the Statistical Commission was a true parent of the Conference indeed.

More than once, the Commission also took note of the existence of non-UN regional organisations in the area of statistics, in particular the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Middle East Statistical Bureau. About other players on the international statistical podium, it believed that '…little can be said definitely at this time about the prospective statistical activities of the International Fund and Bank[9].

Notwithstanding its support for specialized and regional statistical organisations, the Commission did not want these organisations to get in the way too much. It maintained that, in spite of the usefulness of such bodies, the United Nations must have the right of direct contact with national governments in the field of statistics[10].

### *Birth of the Conference of European Statisticians*

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), as part of the overall structure of the United Nations Organization had been created when the UN Charter was ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council and the majority of other signatories: 24 October 1945. In Europe, the founding members were Belarus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the USSR and Yugoslavia. From outside Europe, the United States joined right from the start. Greece ratified one day later than the others. Later that year Belgium, Canada, The Netherlands, Norway and Portugal joined. Chapter XIII of the ECE Charter enabled the Commission to set up subsidiary bodies[11].

However, it would take a few years before a committee on statistics was created. Although some statistical work was being done by the ECE, statistics were not its first priority. There were many other problems to address. Europe was struggling with the aftermath of World War II and moreover the European political climate had become rather chilly. This was the time when Churchill coined the term 'Iron Curtain'. 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient

[9] Document E/Stat/W.4 of 26 April 1946.
[10] Document E/39, paragraph 54.
[11] Currently, the ECE has seven principal subsidiary bodies, including the Conference of European Statisticians.

states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow'[12].

In that light this is perhaps the right place to mention that one of the Conference's most pleasant and rather unique characteristics has always been that statisticians from both sides of the then Iron Curtain met and deliberated technical and policy issues of their trade in peace and friendship. Very rarely, politics and statistics got mixed up. And curiously, because the seating arrangement of countries was in (English) alphabetical order, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany were neighbours, as were the USA and the USSR.

In the beginning the ECE organised its statistical work through its various policy-oriented working parties, such as the Inland Transport Committee, rather than a specific statistical body. The issue of how statistics can best be positioned vis-à-vis policy is both old and topical. Countries have chosen different solutions in this regard (there are centralized and decentralized national statistical systems in varying degrees), and so have international organisations. In the UN Secretariat in New York, statistics is a centralized function. So it is in the IMF and the European Commission, but not in the World Bank. Moreover, these solutions evolve over time. The UK has in recent years moved towards more centralization and so has the OECD, to some extent. Currently, however, the regional UN Commissions for Africa (ECA), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Western Asia (ESCWA) are moving (decentralizing) their statistical operations towards policy (and, in the case of the ECA, to sub-regional offices as well). In this regard it is interesting to note that the Economic Commission for Europe initially took a decentralized approach, but after a few years moved towards centralization and has since then always stuck to this solution.

The 4th session of the Statistical Commission (25 April to 6 May 1949) noted that the first Regional Meeting of European Statisticians (RMES) had been held in Geneva, from 14-18 March of that same year, convened jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Statistical Commission. Idenburg (The Netherlands) had chaired it. The meeting had set up several working groups, including one to define its role. A second RMES took place in 1951. At the third RMES meeting (1953)[13], the report of this working group was adopted, and the RMES was subsequently named the Conference of European Statisticians.

The relevant part of the report reads as follows: 'In order to meet a generally felt need for intensified efforts to improve European statistics, and in accordance with the request made by the Economic and Social Council that consultation among representatives of statistical agencies or European Governments should be encouraged and facilitated, the participants in the Third Regional Meeting of European Statisticians held in Geneva from 15-19 June 1953 agreed to meet henceforth

[12] Sinews of Peace, speech of March 5, 1946 at the acceptance of an honorary degree of Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri.

[13] E/CN.3/CONF.3/1, E/ECE/167, Appendix C, 24 June 1953. Why 1952 instead of 1953 is seen as the start of the CES, is not entirely clear.

as a continuing body, to be known as The Conference of European Statisticians under the auspices of the United Nations'. And it continues: 'The Conference is designed to establish on a firmer basis the machinery recommended by the Statistical Commission at its Third and Fourth Sessions and agreed by the Economic and Social Council at its Seventh and Ninth Sessions'. The meeting elected Idenburg as the first Chairman of the Conference. Closon (France) and Campion (United Kingdom) were elected vice-chairs.

In a statement, Idenburg immediately addressed some issues of relations between the Conference and other parties. 'I have been concerned with a number of points raised by representatives of the specialized agencies and other international bodies. I wish therefore to give them unmistakable assurances about which they may wish to inform their agencies. In the first place, the Conference will operate completely within the United Nations framework, utilizing all the machinery and arrangements for collaboration and co-ordination. Moreover, the basic agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies will, of course, continue to operate and to apply to the activities of the Conference…Finally, I wish to ask for the full participation of the specialized agencies and other international organisations in the work of this Conference. We shall be grateful for all the help they will find it possible to give us and we hope that the help we may be able to provide them will in their view justify the setting up of this Conference'.

About what the Regional Meetings and later the Conference were supposed to do, slightly diverging opinions seem to have existed. Many statisticians from Member States probably thought that 'harmonization' was one of the key issues. Staehle, however, Chief of the Statistical Section, Research and Planning Division of the ECE and therefore the ranking statistician at the ECE Secretariat, had his own views, which do not sound all that statistician-friendly. In a letter to Frisch[14], urging him to attend the Regional Meeting of 1949, he writes that 'The invitations have been sent out through official channels, and I expect the principal attendance to consist of representatives of government statistical offices. However, it is our intention to use this meeting not as an occasion for the statisticians to discuss their current difficulties and *other relatively irrelevant aspects connected with the collection and presentation of national data.* What we intend to do is to get them to state clearly what, *if anything*, they are prepared to do to make macro-economic studies of the European economy possible. This is, of course, in a certain sense an innovation, which may not be welcomed by all the official authorities in the field of statistics. But I hope, nevertheless, by confronting the statisticians with their responsibilities *to consider statistics not as an end in itself* [15] but as a tool for economic analysis, to obtain some results'[16]. It may be noted that although the Conference did not become what Staehle wanted it to become, nevertheless the ECE Statistical Division is responsible for providing the ECE with comparable statistics for economic analysis with the willing help of member countries and of other international organisations.

[14] Ragnar Frisch (Norway), 1969 Nobel laureate (economics), jointly with J. Tinbergen (The Netherlands).
[15] Italics are the author's.
[16] Letter of 18 February 1949.

### *A small group of actors*

Perhaps a few possible misunderstandings should be addressed at this point. First of all the uninitiated reader might think that international statistical cooperation was an entirely new thing. It was not. The promotion of international comparability of statistics was by no means new. Apart from the International Statistical Institute (the world professional association of statisticians, established in 1885) and its conferences, which were for a long time largely focused on issues of international harmonization of official statistics, it was indeed in Geneva that the League of Nations had been quite active in this regard. The UN in principle took over what the League had started. (See the separate chapter on the League.)

And secondly: on the outside it may seem that all these different committees and institutions (the Statistical Commission, the Conference, the International Statistical Institute and others) were entirely independent from one another. Technically this was true, but in reality the main players were a relatively small group of people (head statisticians and other senior officials from national statistical offices) who changed hats all the time. Though he was certainly not the only one to play multiple roles, the Dutch Chief Statistician Idenburg was an exceptional case. He was a member of the first 'regular' Statistical Commission in 1947 and was elected as its chairman in 1949, as well as chairman of the UN Population Commission. In the Statistical Commission he was the principal advocate of the creation of a Conference of European Statisticians. In addition he was chairman of UNESCO's commission of statistical experts, Secretary General of ISI and chairman of the Benelux Statistical Commission.

It was the Benelux countries that, for the 3d session of the Economic Commission for Europe (26 April 1948), had asked Myrdal[17], the Executive Secretary of the ECE, to add an agenda item 'Cooperation in the field of statistics in Europe'[18]. The Dutch were among the strongest driving forces behind the creation of the Conference. A memorandum of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (sent 16 April 1948[19]) underpinned this request: 'The comparability of the statistical data leaves much to be desired, and it cannot be denied that this is a cause of confusion and uncertainty. A great deal of work has so far been done by the International Statistical Institute and by the League of Nations with a view to improve this state of affairs. United Nations is now continuing the efforts towards such improvement. The Economic Commission for Europe may contribute their share to the accomplishment of this task, and in the interest of their own work, it will be incumbent on them to do so. The question may be raised as to whether this work could not be left entirely to United Nations with their Statistical Commission and their Statistical Bureau at Lake Success. The answer is negative. Notwithstanding the fact that the Commission as well as the Office are in touch with nearly all countries of the world, and both institutions are satisfactorily active in promoting the development of statistics in numerous fields as well as their comparability,

[17] Gunnar Myrdal (Sweden), 1974 Nobel laureate (economics), jointly with F. von Hajek (Austria).
[18] Informal note on the historical origins of the Conference of European Statisticians, CES/Bur.99/25, 2 February 1999.
[19] Teleprint message E.1265, 16 April 1948.

the efficiency of this work which also embraces countries with low statistical standards must be seriously hampered by its formidable extent'.[20]

Idenburg's commitment to the cause of international statistical cooperation is reflected in his statement to the Dutch Central Commission of Statistics, 21 May 1949. He said: 'As to the Dutch contributions to all these bodies and their committees, sub-committees and working parties, it is clear that the efforts required, in particular by senior staff, are considerable. However, we cannot stand aside, even if we consider this international work to be time-consuming, costly and not very effective, because it cannot be ignored that a new world-order is being built, in which our country too must take its place. And we are thankful when we can contribute to shaping this new order'[21].

***Legacy of the League of Nations*** (see also Chapter 1 on the League)

Its is relevant to look briefly back in time to show that neither the Statistical Commission nor the Conference had to start from scratch. In several respects the League of Nations had laid the foundations. In principle, the United Nations, also in statistics, was supposed to take over the estate of the League of Nations lock, stock and barrel.

And there was something in the estate too. For example[22]: as early as 1928 there had been a major League of Nation's conference on statistics. Afterwards, the Great Depression and the development of macro-economic theory shortly before World War II have strongly stimulated the work in this field. In 1939 the League of Nations had published, for 26 countries, the first more or less harmonized national income estimates. Tinbergen[23] of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics did important work in the area of national income estimates during the War. Later in 1945, the League of Nations organised a meeting of the National Income sub-committee of its Statistical Experts Commission in the United States (Princeton, N.J.). It appeared that Bjerve in Norway and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and the Central Statistical Office in London had done very similar studies[24].

After the War, one of the main reasons to speed up the harmonization process of national income accounting was the decision to base the contributions that countries had to pay to the UN and some other international organisations on their national incomes. The National Income sub-committee particularly discussed a memorandum written by Stone[25]. Stone's 1947 report of the meeting was the basis of what would later become the System of National Accounts (SNA). The first version of the SNA manual would be published in 1953. Meanwhile, the United Nations had already begun collecting national income statistics.

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[20] Memorandum concerning cooperation in the field of statistics in Europe, by Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, 26 March 1948, S-2244-2-3-'48.
[21] Jaarverslag Central Commissie voor de Statistiek, 1949 (Dutch).
[22] The League of Nations had been active in several other fields of statistics as well.
[23] Jan Tinbergen (The Netherlands), 1969 Nobel laureate (economics), jointly with R. Frisch (Norway).
[24] (UK) Government White Paper 'An analysis of the sources of War Finance and Estimates of the National Income and Expenditure in the years 1938 to 1944'.
[25] Richard Stone (United Kingdom), 1984 Nobel laureate (economics).

### *Finding its place in the world*

In his opening remarks for the 3d Conference meeting (26 September-1 October 1955) Idenburg particularly welcomed the participants from the countries of Eastern Europe. He concluded his opening address[26] by saying: 'Our organisation has not yet grown to full stature or found its place in the world, but I think it is on its way'.

Several international organisations reported about their activities, including ILO and the European Coal and Steel Community; both organisations appeared to be active in the areas of labour cost surveys and family budget surveys. Mahalanobis (chairman of the Statistical Commission) reported what had been discussed in New York. There were 25 member states present. During the 5th meeting (17-21 June 1957[27]) Israel participated for the first time. Hansen of the US Bureau of the Census gave a presentation about data processing with 'electronic machines'. Some member countries expressed the view that the Conference should adopt a cautious attitude towards the introduction of 'such large-scale centralized computers'. One year later (6th CES, 2-6 June 1958)[28] chairman Closon (France) concluded that all the countries of Europe were now represented. He had also noted that similar meetings of statisticians were held in other continents. He expressed gratitude for the assistance received from the UN Statistical Office in New York, particularly its director Leonard.

There are many other examples of how the Conference worked together with, or at least took careful note of activities by others. In the years from 1959 to 1977 (when the 25th anniversary of the Conference was celebrated), apart from routine reporting, specific discussions were held about activities of the European Communities, the OEEC/OECD, the inter-Scandinavian statistical meetings (later under the umbrella of the Nordic Secretariat), the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, also known as Comecon), Harvard University (a joint conference on input-output techniques was held in Geneva), the Customs Cooperation Council, the International Chamber of Commerce and the IMF (joint meetings about Balance of Payments statistics were held). The report of the 17th session[29] (5-15 October 1972) explicitly mentions that in many cases, the UN Statistical Office in New York had prepared the substantive papers for ECE working groups. Meanwhile, it had also become more and more standard procedure that when specialized agencies of the UN held statistical meetings in Europe, they were organised jointly with the CES. By 1975, the Conference had 29 member countries.

Among the many different areas of statistics the Conference discussed, national accounting, again, deserves special mention, if only because there were two fundamentally different systems of macro-economic statistics being used in Europe: the System of National Accounts (SNA) in the

[26] Document CES/37, 7 October 1955.
[27] Document CES/80, 10 July 1957.
[28] Document CES/94, 25 June 1958.
[29] Document E/5236, E/CN.3/440.

capitalist West and the Material Products System (MPS)[30] in the socialist East. One of the principal differences between SNA and MPS was that MPS treated a number of services as 'unproductive'[31]. This made macro-economic comparisons between SNA- countries and MPS-countries difficult. Therefore, the Conference had for a long time encouraged countries to try and run parallel systems. In practice, Hungary, however, was the only country that actually did implement both systems consistently.

At the time of the 25th Conference, 27 June to 1 July 1977[32] there was little doubt left about the Conference's place in the world. Davies (UK) left as the director of the ECE Statistical Division, a post he had held since 1953. Haeder (GDR) was appointed as the new director.

***Benelux, OEEC and others***

There were some other organisations active in European statistics as well, in particular Benelux, the Nordic Secretariat and the OEEC. What they did had various kinds of impact on the work of the Conference, if only because of overlapping memberships. I will just briefly address Benelux and OEEC. After that I will go into the activities of the European Communities in somewhat greater detail, because the membership of the European Communities (later: European Union) has over time grown to cover large parts of the ECE area.

The Benelux experience was a sort of testing ground for broader international statistical cooperation. Officially, the Customs Union between Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg (a result of negotiations between the three governments-in-exile in London) was established on January 1st 1948, but as early as 1946 intensive negotiations about the statistical consequences of such a Union had already begun. By far the most important statistical area for Benelux was external trade statistics. The ambitions to co-ordinate Benelux statistics, however, went beyond international trade alone. To that effect the Council of the Economic Union had created (12 December 1946) a co-ordinating committee for Benelux statistics.

A second priority topic the committee dealt with was the Consumer Price Index. After long negotiations it was agreed that The Netherlands would adopt some features of the Belgian methodology. However, to compare absolute price levels in the three countries, a 1934/'35 Dutch basket of commodities was used. 'Basket' has to be taken almost literally here: to achieve harmonized price collection (i.e. prices of items that were of comparable quality and quantity) a box containing samples of Dutch articles was circulating in the three countries. A third important issue was the wage index. In addition, port statistics, production statistics, household budget statistics and agricultural statistics were on the agenda in the early years of Benelux statistical cooperation. Co-

[30] Basic Principles of the System of Balances of the National Economy, and Comparison of the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy, Studies in Methods, ST/STAT/SER.F/ 20, part I and Part II, 1971 and 1981 respectively.
[31] Housing services, hotel and travel, passenger transport, postal and communications services for personal use, personal services (e.g. hairdressers), banking and financial services, education and health, entertainment and sport, research, defence, administration and public services.
[32] Document ECE/CES/10.

ordination of statistics between Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg would remain a serious issue for about twenty years.

Another player that has to be mentioned is the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC, as of 1961 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD). Founded in 1948, it had to manage and monitor the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of post-war Europe. Naturally, statistics were an important element in the monitoring process. A few years later, also as a part of the Marshall Plan, several statistical teams visited the US on study tours on labour statistics, industrial statistics and the measurement of productivity. The Americans, being the financial sponsors of the Marshall Plan, were of course keen to assess to what extent their money helped to promote the economic recovery in Europe. Statistics were a key element in this assessment process. Therefore, all Marshall countries regularly had to supply reports to the Marshall-Administrator in Paris, for example about the so-called 'Marshall-imports' of key supplies and raw materials for certain industries.

In the early days, the (statistical) relations between OEEC and ECE were not as cordial as they are today. In a letter[33] to Paretti of the Economic Directorate of the OEEC[34], Staehle writes that the OEEC is not welcome as an observer to the March 1949 Regional Meeting of European Statisticians. He refers to '…our agreement, which, as you recall, provides that we do not invite each other to our meetings since all members of OEEC are also members of ECE and therefore there exists the very simple device of ensuring participation by having government delegations include whoever wishes to participate in one meeting or another'. Apparently, OEEC took the matter up with the UN in New York, because shortly afterwards[35] Leonard of the UN Statistical Office wrote to Staehle: 'I, of course, am not intimately aware of the interpretation which you are placing on the treaty between ECE and OEEC, but I hope that some kind of interpretation can be made so that McDougall[36] could attend as an observer or perhaps could be in Geneva for some other business and come to the meeting incidentally, so to speak. Again, the meeting is not, strictly speaking, an ECE meeting inasmuch as it is jointly sponsored by Headquarters. There are, no doubt, other devices which you might be able to think of in the light of your experience, but I feel sure that your ingenuity is up to this matter!'

### *Rise of the European Communities*

The establishment, but more particularly the growth and the changing role of the European Communities over the years, have been of great significance for the Conference of European Statisticians.

There is no other continent where a situation as in Europe exists: a regional commission of the UN, covering all the countries of the region, but at the same time a 'competing' organisation

[33] Letter of 22 January 1949.
[34] Later on he joined Eurostat.
[35] Letter of 4 February 1949, ECA-30/09.
[36] The envisaged OEEC representative.

that covers a substantial and growing number of these countries. And moreover: an organisation in which statistics have over the years gained enormous importance, an organisation as well that can impose statistical standards on its member states. And to complicate matters even more, all the countries of that second organisation are also members of a third statistically active organisation: the OECD.

The foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, Paris, 18 April 1951) was the beginning of an era of continuously growing influence of Brussels and Luxembourg on the work programme of the statistical offices of the member states. From the very beginning, the ECSC High Authority required a lot of statistics, not only about the production, stocks, trade and transport of coal and steel, but also about wages, prices, rent, household budgets etc. The statistical office of the ECSC was created in 1953; it was located in Luxembourg. A few years later, the Treaty of Rome (March 1957, effective 1 January 1958) established the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom[37]. Although 'common institutions' for the three Communities (the European Commission and its directorates-general) would be created only ten years later, the statisticians immediately urged (successfully) for the creation of a common statistical office. 1959 saw the birth of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC)[38].

Although SOEC in 1959 had a staff of only 58, its activities were widespread. In the very beginning it started with a wage cost statistics project and published its first compendium of agricultural statistics. Soon afterwards (1960) the first Labour Force Survey was launched and the first energy balance sheets (1962) and input-output tables (1965) were published. An important step too was the adoption (1970) of the first version of the European edition (SEC) of the UN System of National Accounts, as well as the European version of ISIC industrial classifiaction system, called NACE. In 1972 the European Regulation for a commodity classification for international trade statistics NIMEXE was adopted. Clearly, all these developments had a strong impact on the work of the Conference, because first six, then nine, then twelve and then fifteen countries in the ECE region followed these standards (not counting the countries that aspired to become members in the near future, as well as many other countries on a voluntary basis).

On a more mundane level there was an impact as well: the many meetings SOEC organised sometimes competed with ECE meetings, both at the expert level and at the head statistician level. Not long after the ECSC had been established, regular meetings of the directors-general of the national statistical offices of the six member states were held, as a rule twice a year. The first meeting was on 15 July 1953, less than a month after the creation of the Conference of European Statisticians. Soon the name DGINS (short for the official French name conférence des Directeurs-Généraux des Instituts Nationales de la Statistique) was given to these meetings. Starting in 1956 (when the meeting took place in Paris) the tradition developed to have the spring meetings in one of the member states and the autumn meetings in Luxembourg or Brussels. In 1989 the status of the DGINS changed when it was transformed into an official EU body (Statistical Programme Committee, SPC for short). The SPC advises the European Commission on all matters concerning

[37] European Atomic Energy Community, officially EAEC, more commonly known as Euratom.
[38] The name Eurostat was introduced informally later.

the statistical work programs of Eurostat, as well as deciding on certain aspects of their implementation. It now meets at least four times per year and therefore represents a considerable burden on heads of national statistical offices. The term DGINS was kept for meetings of a different kind: annual seminars to discuss topical issues in statistics and important development in methodology and statistical organisation.

***Three periods***

Perhaps the history of the Conference may be divided roughly into three periods. The first period, from 1953 to about 1975 might be called the period of expansion. As I have set out, this was the time when the Conference carved out its place in the international statistical world. The number of countries that participated increased until all countries of the European region attended the meetings (at least: the plenary sessions). The cooperation with other organisations gradually developed and intensified. Certainly in the beginning there was also a great deal of idealism. The Conference, in statistical solidarity, prided itself in providing a non-political bridge across the divide of the Iron Curtain.

The second period, roughly from 1975 to 1990, I would call the period of consolidation. The exchanges in the meetings may have remained interesting and constructive, but to some extent keeping the balance between East and West became almost ritualistic. When the latest chairperson of the Conference had been from the West, the next one had to come from the East. When the Bureau was enlarged to four (one chair, three vice-chairs) two of the members had to be from the West, two from the East. When two countries from the West presented papers for substantive discussion, the East had to provide two papers as well. 'Consolidation' does not imply that there were no innovations. On the contrary, this was the period in which the Conference held a series of seminars on topics of broad interest. The first one (Washington D.C., 1977) was on co-ordination problems in official statistics, the second one (Moscow, 1981) on the use of information technology. Later seminars dealt with statistical organisation and legislation, and dissemination and marketing.

In contrast to the idealism of the early years, times would come (particularly in the eighties), when some countries in Western Europe were wondering if they got enough out of the Economic Commission for Europe, in return for what they invested. From time to time the ECE reviewed the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and policies. In that framework the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs occasionally inquired to what extent the countries of Eastern Europe had enough to offer that was of interest for, in the case of statistics, Statistics Netherlands. The question was, in other words: is there a reasonable balance between what we give and what we get? The answer that Statistics Netherlands usually provided was that perhaps the countries of the West were more advanced in some respects, but that the East had interesting things to offer as well. And if the balance was not perfect, did that matter? Was not the Conference a useful non-political instrument for pan-European statistical progress?

The third period, roughly from 1990 to 2000, I would call the period of transition and reform. The historical landmark year in this regard was of course 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell. In 1991 the Soviet Union fell apart. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union had to overhaul and rebuild their statistical systems or, in some cases, set up these systems from scratch. For a while, questions like the above 'what is in it for us' were no longer asked by the West. There was euphoria about how rapidly the East moved towards market economy systems and parliamentary democracy. Assisting the 'transition countries' became a priority across the ECE, but also for the European Union, the OECD, the IMF, the World Bank and other international organisations. ECE's Statistical Division started issuing a Newsletter for Transition projects. The OECD did something similar. The European Union launched enormous cooperation programs for transition countries (PHARE for Central and Eastern Europe, TACIS for the countries of the former Soviet Union). A committee (the Ripert[39] Committee, after its chairman) was created to co-ordinate the statistical efforts of all the international organisations involved. A CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States, the former Soviet Union republics) statistical committee (office) was established.

In the meetings of the Conference also, transition issues for a while became an almost dominating theme. This was not universally appreciated. In a meeting of the early nineties, the delegation of Turkey forcefully complained about these developments; it thought a better balance between transition and other issues had to be struck. In 1991/1992 the Fundamental Principles were drafted and adopted, first by the Conference and by the ECE, later (1994) also by the UN Statistical Commission.

Apart from a period in which transition was a central theme, the nineties were also a period of reform of the procedures and operations of the Conference. The Bureau was restructured and enlarged to six members. To enhance continuity, members could henceforth be elected to four successive Bureaux, instead of just for a two-year term to one Bureau[40]. Interim co-option of Bureau members (in case of a vacancy) was introduced. Standing invitations to attend Bureau meetings were extended to some permanent observers (the chief statisticians of Eurostat, the OECD, UNSD, IMF and CIS). Finally, the Integrated Presentation of statistical programmes was developed, a document in which, thematically, all statistical activities of all the international organisations are presented (at least to the extent that they are relevant for the ECE region), for discussion by the Conference.

### *In my Father's house are many mansions*[41]

Although this article is about history, some final words about the present and the future can hardly be avoided. Are we about to enter a new, fourth period in the history of the Conference?

[39] Then Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.
[40] The Chairman, however, can only be re-elected once.
[41] Gospel by John, 14:2.

The 2002 session of the Conference will not only celebrate 50 years of history, but will also look into proposals to restructure the way the Conference works in the future[42]. Is restructuring necessary and why? Surely the situation in Europe, with the EU and the OECD having their own ways and priorities, is unique, as I have explained before. In addition, at a more practical level, few would disagree that there are perhaps too many meetings of heads of national statistical offices in Europe. And certainly, differences in statistical development between the countries of Western Europe (and the OECD countries outside Europe) and the other ECE countries exist; yet, to a large extent this has always been the case, and the differences are now reducing through the "transition" process. To illustrate this point: as early as March 1948 the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics issued a memorandum in which it was already said that: 'Great is the difference in the state of development reached in statistics in the various countries of Europe'[43].

Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that, over the last ten years or so, the evolution of statistical systems across the countries of Europe has been particularly uneven. In different countries and groups of countries, there have been different driving forces. The countries of the European Union (and its accession countries) have had to comply with the rules and requirements of the EU ('acquis communautaires'). In the Euro-zone (a subset of the EU), demands of the European Central Bank, in addition, play a dominant role. Yet different are the demands of the OECD. In much of 'the West' (although the borderline between West and East has become very blurred), problems of measuring the 'new economy', reducing the reporting burden, measuring the effects of quality changes in the Consumer Price Index, etc. are perhaps more urgent and manifest than in 'the East'. Many countries of the former Soviet Union wrestle more with issues: involving the users more, fully implementing the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, getting sufficient resources, retaining staff, in some cases developing proper statistical legislation etc. There are also diverging philosophies and developments as to the use of administrative registrations for statistical purposes between groups of countries, as well as different attitudes towards confidentiality issues and the use of statistical micro-data for research purposes.

I would argue, however, that a lot of common ground has remained and is increasing. The question that remains is therefore how the Conference can remain the European statistical 'house' that has rooms for all the different interests and how its architecture and 'house rules' have to be changed to make everyone feel at home. Being the formidable structure that it is, I am confident that the Conference will adapt and survive.

[42] Main document for discussion is: Note on Renewing the Conference of European Statisticians, by Ivan Fellegi and Yves Franchet, CES/BUR.2002/10/Rev.2, 28 February 2002.
[43] Memorandum concerning cooperation in the field of statistics in Europe, S-2244-2-3-'48, 26 March 1948.

## CHAPTER 3

# The Development and Achievements of the Conference of European Statisticians up to the 1990s: the Point of View of Western Countries[1]

Much happened in the period between the two "charters" of the Conference of European Statisticians. The 1953 charter had given the terms of reference : objectives, membership, institutional structure and intended activities. The 1992 charter would claim to be a kind of constitution stipulating the "10 commandments of official statistics". In between those two historical landmarks development and achievements took place within a broader framework of international statistical cooperation. The Conference had a permanent function, but also played at various times a crucial role in the progress of official statistics.

Composed of the heads of national statistical offices within the region covered by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), assisted by the staff of the ECE Statistical Division[2], the Conference had been instituted within the UN Organization. Its domain of activity naturally belonged to that conducted at the world level by the UN Statistical Commission, which had a permanent secretariat in the UN headquarters and regularly met in New York. Heads of Western European statistical offices were also involved in the work of the OEEC (which became OECD in 1961). A number of them were moreover taking part in the closer cooperation needed for the European Economic Community. Heads of Eastern European offices were similarly involved in statistical cooperation within the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Interactions between the various parts of this network were strong. Not only heads of statistical offices but also some of their staff and outside experts worked on projects separately launched from two or even three agencies.

Within the network the Conference had permanent functions: to spread information about the activities of the Statistical Commission, to adapt its guidelines to the particularities of the European region, to reflect on priorities to assign to future international cooperation at the European or world level, to give mandates to those of its members who also belonged of the Statistical Commission. The Conference had moreover to promote the quality and comparability of national statistics within Europe, particularly comparability between Eastern and Western Europe.

The second half of the 20th century was a period of rapid progress in official statistics. As is common to all types of technological progress, breakthroughs owed much to a few initiators and to

[1] This chapter was written by Edmond Malinvaud (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).
[2] Up to 1967 it was the Statistical Section of the ECE Research and Planning Division.

the organisations in which they worked. The Conference and Geneva Statistical Division had their part in this overall movement. Not surprisingly changes in the resources available for the ECE Division and for competing groups elsewhere explain, at least in part, why some periods in the life of the Conference turned out to be less productive than others. Publications in the series Statistical Standards and Studies, instituted by the Conference in 1963, may be an indicator of the tempo in the amount of resources available for more than exercise of the permanent function stricto sensu[3]: 31 volumes were published from 1963 to 1973 and 10 from 1982 to 1988, but only 2 during the years 1974 to 1981 and none in 1989 to 1991 before a resurgence after the period covered by this article. Naturally this article will give greater emphasis to the original contributions of the Conference, as opposed to the exercise of its permanent and more recent functions.

In order to organise the presentation here, we shall first deal with the development of tools for organizing statistical information and integrating it into coherent systems. We shall secondly present how the Conference strived to upraise statistical know-how in various ways. We shall finally concentrate on the promotion of East-West statistical comparability and comparisons.

***Developing integration frameworks***

In the methodology of official statistics a major achievement of the four decades covered by this article was to organise the systems of national accounts, which provide in a consistent manner the aggregate data used in macroeconomic applications. Starting from the initial income and product accounts of the late 1940s, national accounts were much developed and became progressively more embracing. The methodology was made more and more explicit in connection with economic theory. International comparability was a major concern and indeed much improved. This was the work of many national and international offices, a few analytically gifted and far-sighted individuals actually playing a dominant role at some stages.

When the Conference was instituted the first international System of National Accounts (SNA) already existed. It had been approved in 1952 by the Statistical Commission but hardly differed from the standardized system worked out at OEEC, in the conception of which Richard Stone had been influential. However, Western European statisticians were not all satisfied. Some of them had already developed, or were in the process of developing, more ambitious systems. J. Bjerve (1982) reported how this subject was very present in the first activities of the Conference. Here are a few quotations (p. 13-14).

"At the first plenary session in 1953 input-output tables were proposed as a topic to be dealt with… for the purpose of checking the consistency of economic statistics… In 1958-60 statistics of changes in financial assets and liabilities were considered… Both topics were related to a prospective extension of the national accounts".

[3] The Conference showed indeed concern, for instance in June 1987, about the cuts in the resources allocated to the Geneva Statistical Division.

"At the plenary sessions in the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s some members of the Conference, particularly those of the Scandinavian countries [and France], pressed for a general revision and extension of the existing SNA instead of dealing separately with parts of this system. One of their arguments was that such a national accounting system could be more useful as a means of integrating and co-ordinating economic statistics".

"In subsequent years the revision and extension of the SNA constituted a major part of the work programme. Preparatory work was to a large extent carried out at the [New York] UN Statistical Office, but the Conference played an important role as a forum for testing new ideas. The resulting new SNA was published in 1968, and it represented a conceptual framework suitable for the integration of any aspect of national accounts".

In the mid-sixties a group of rapporteurs had been appointed under the auspices of the Conference to look into the comparison between the national accounts of Western countries and the "System of Balances of the National Economy" used in centrally planned countries. Work on this topic extended over many years and will be quoted again in part 3 of this chapter.

A new revision of the SNA was published twenty-five years later, in 1993. The Conference was much less directly involved in its preparation, although it had a permanent Working Party on National Accounts and Balances where European statisticians could react to the progress of the revision. The New York Statistical Office had taken the lead in the early 1980s with a famous but disputable report by Nancy and Richard Ruggles (which was actually published in 1984, in a slightly revised form, by the Statistical Journal of the UN Economic Commission for Europe). Subsequently, Eurostat working groups, the study at OECD of statistics on environment, services and new technologies, the needs of the European Community, the IMF and the World Bank created sufficient concerns for a systematic revision and extension. This was in large part drafted by Peter Hill (OECD). André Vanoli (INSEE) was associated both at the conception stage and in the final polishing of the text, which bears the joint stamp of the UN, IMF, World Bank, OECD and European Community.

A less successful project for developing an integration framework of social statistics was on the agenda of the Conference for about a decade. It concerned the development of a so-called "integrated System of Social and Demographic Statistics" (SSDS). The project met with some enthusiasm at the beginning. The experience gained from its closed study is worth remembering. Moreover the project brought welcome by-products.

In 1968, precisely when the first revised SNA was adopted, the Conference decided that in the subsequent five-year period high priority should be given to the SSDS. A Working Party should be established, which would organise implementation of the project and co-ordinate activities on subsystems for which separate expert meetings would also be convened. In other words a procedure similar to the one which had functioned well for national accounts was contemplated. Actually the comparison turned out to be somewhat misleading, as appears in the report given by Bjerve (1982, p. 14-17).

In 1969 the Conference discussed papers presented by Claus Moser and Richard Stone. The main focus of disagreement between heads of statistical offices was then to know whether social and demographic statistics should first be integrated at the level of the individual. A year later after examination by the Working Party, it was decided that the system should be designed for integration of aggregated data only. But at the time many in OECD, ILO and even in the UN were arguing for the establishment of internationally standardized "social indicators". The Conference thought it wise to decide to include social indicators in the SSDS, although different views were held about the implications of the decision. In subsequent years much time was devoted on the project. At the 1976 plenary session the Conference had to decide about future guidelines. It expressed satisfaction with the progress made as regards the development of concepts, classifications and definitions. But it criticized the Working Party for its treatment of social indicators and for the relatively slow progress of the work on subsystems. Bjerve (1982) concludes : "At any rate, this work has brought national statistical offices into closer contact with the users of social statistics, and it has contributed to an integrated presentation of such statistics" (p. 15). "Future work… will… put little emphasis on developing standard tables for presentation purposes. Instead, users will be able to retrieve data in accordance with their particular needs through direct and interactive access to computerized data bases" (p. 16). With a definitely more modest mandate than previously the Working Party went on throughout the 1980s, dealing in particular with the harmonization of social indicators and with classifications in the socio-demographic field.

Detailed classifications are indispensable, not only for accurate answers to the many specific requests for information addressed to statistical offices, but also for giving a precise content to the aggregates used in economic or social analysis. Since such analysis often implies international comparisons, great interest attaches to the existence of international standardized classifications. Fifty years ago relatively few national classifications existed and relatively little had been done for their international harmonization (see also the chapter on the League of Nations). This is why so much effort was spent since then in this area. Development and standardization of economic and social classifications was during these past decades a major permanent item of the programme at the UN Statistical Commission. The Conference was much interested in this progress : it had little direct responsibility, but wanted to follow, stimulate and advise what was done at the world or European level. Besides its specific input concerning comparisons with the classifications used in Eastern Europe, a subject to be examined in the last part of this article, it regularly surveyed the work in progress at its annual plenary sessions. Here are some examples of the interest brought by the Conference to classifications.

The International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), which was discussed by the Conference in 1968, was one of the important benchmarks for the formulation of the general nomenclature of economic activities in the European Communities (NACE), published in 1970. The Conference made considerable contributions to the development of an International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), in cooperation with the International Labour Office, and an International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), in cooperation with UNESCO.

At its 1986 plenary session one of the major items of the agenda concerned the problems raised by the integration of the various international classifications. Official statisticians then had the experience of the efforts made over a decade for achieving a certain degree of integration not only between various classifications of products but also between ISIC concerning economic activities and SITC (Standard International Trade Classification) concerning products. Attention had then to be given to the interest in, and convenience of, such integration. Some statisticians entertained the idea of a larger project involving other international classifications. The Conference, conscious that a strategic choice had to be made for many years, seriously examined the options in June 1986. It pointed out that any standard international classification is the outcome of a painful process of compromises and is later repeatedly the object of criticisms because new domains of application and new conceptual apparatuses require new distinctions. Such being the case some flexibility has to be maintained in the system of standard classifications. In order to cope with the resulting dilemmas statisticians and users however need to be served by good co-ordination between agencies and by conversions tables between classifications.

### *Increasing statistical know-how*

From its beginning the Conference stressed exchange of experience between its members, dissemination of new methods and procedures in official statistics, as well as improvement in the quality and international comparability of public statistics. How and how well were these objectives achieved during almost four decades, as seen from Western Europe, this could be the subject of a full book. Here the survey will be limited to four aspects : the organisation of the work of the Conference, its role in examining the functions and management of national offices, in improving statistical methods, finally in the example of statistics on the environment[4].

### *Organisation*

In retrospect the flexible organisation put in place by the initiators of the Conference appeared to have been quite appropriate to its regular functioning. Indeed, no major change was subsequently needed, just adaptations such as the explicit introduction of the category "informal meetings" (mainly because of budget constraints) and the implementation of the initial views about publications. Activities were organised by fields of statistics or within "programmes". They involved permanent Working Parties or temporary Study Groups. On specific topics, particularly on problems perceived as interfering with the development of statistics, seminars were planned, often sponsored jointly by several international bodies. In addition to the plenary session something like a dozen meetings were held every year.

An important part of this activity had its outlet in publications, notably in the 42 issues of the series Statistical Standards and Studies published between 1963 and 1988. Here we find recommendations for European population censuses (1960, 1970, 1980, 1990), for family budget

[4] No attention will be given to what had been a dominant concern of national chief statisticians in the first post-war decade, namely to coordinate the statistical activities of international organisations. This is perfectly described in Bjerve (1982), p. 4-10.

enquiries, for the use of electronic computers, and so on. We find documentation about the progress of some programmes : housing statistics, statistics of distributive trades, basic statistics of inland transport, environment statistics… We find processed data such as those given by the standardized input-output tables (around 1959, 1965, 1970, 1975), by experimental East-West comparisons, by international comparisons of Gross Domestic Product (1980, 1985). We find also more methodological contributions.

Speaking of publications it is relevant to signal the launching in 1982 of the Statistical Journal of the UN Economic Commission for Europe. Publishing mainly articles from authors who do not belong to the ECE, the journal is an expression of the search for exchanges of experience, which is characteristic of the Conference. It is edited by the ECE Statistical Division with the aims : (i) to inform the professional world of statisticians, whether involved with theoretical or practical problems, of the work of the Conference ; (ii) to establish a forum for critical discussion of the entire range of problems – organisational, methodological, analytical or conceptual – facing statistical services ; and thereby (iii) to facilitate the maintenance of high quality in the future work of the Conference of European Statisticians. In order to achieve aim (i), each issue of the journal finishes with a few pages giving information about the recent work and forthcoming meetings of the Conference, and contains usually one unsigned article written by the Statistical Division about such or such programme of the Conference. Many articles come from papers for meetings in the CES programme.

***Functions and management of national offices***

There are two reasons why exchanges of experience between national statisticians are particularly advisable: the rapid change in the technology of official statistics; the fact that different conditions applied, and still apply, in different countries. The second reason might be overlooked by outsiders, but it is so well known by official statisticians that a brief reference may suffice here.

The place of official statistics in public administration differs because of both the range of missions assigned to the statistical offices and the degree of availability of administrative data to statisticians. In some countries, like Belgium, the mission of the central statistical office is strictly limited to the core function: to produce statistical data and make them available to users. In others like Norway and France, the central office has also to analyse socio-economic data, to assess the social structures and economic trends in the country, to publish and interpret demographic or economic projections. Some countries but not others have population or housing registers, which make censuses only marginally useful. Data collected by fiscal authorities may or may not be available to official statisticians, and they may even be somewhat adapted in view of statistical uses.

Exchanges of experience are particularly significant at the plenary sessions, where chief statisticians meet. They take place mostly within the "substantive discussions" systematically organised in the agenda of the session. During the decades in question such discussions often concentrated on challenging management issues, for instance adaptation of statistics to user needs,

protection of the confidentiality of individual data, quality of statistical registers, centralization or decentralization in electronic processing, use of statistics in public decisions.

A natural outgrowth of this management concern was the institution in 1961 of a permanent programme on Electronic Data Processing, run mainly by a Working Party. Not only did it organise seminars, particularly since 1971 on Integrated Statistical Information Systems, but it ended up also launching a Statistical Computing Project with the primary objective of developing a software well adapted to the needs of statistical production processes[5].

### *Methodology*

The Conference had to pay attention to methodology, although it was clearly not designed for developing academic research, nor even for promoting the utilization of new results of statistical theory in official statistics. During the first two decades methodological meetings dealt with production and price indices, with seasonal adjustments of time series, with the newly developing sample surveys of households, more generally with all aspects of sampling in official statistics. Subject-matter meetings were also discussing methodological problems where they occurred.

For instance such was the case with the "UN International Comparison Project" (ICP), which is otherwise interesting in this paper. The project was established in 1968 with a central staff shared between the UN headquarters in New York and the University of Pennsylvania, which had earlier gained expertise in this kind of work. The purpose was to build a world-wide system for detailed comparison of the purchasing power of currencies and, as a natural extension, for comparison of real gross domestic products and aggregate incomes. The programme of work, which is still in operation and is now expanding, did not involve the UN Economic Commission for Europe at the beginning. But in 1979 and subsequently a project of the Conference, also involving Eurostat and OECD, "Comparison within the ICP framework for the European region". Intervention of the Conference took the form of substantial efforts for improving the quality of the results, which required both methodological rigour and fieldwork[6]. For instance Poland and France were involved in collecting detailed data on retail prices and actual structures of consumption. Similarity of specifications for goods and services, of methods applied in collection and of controls made, were closely tested for each group of items.

### *Environment statistics as an example[7]*

The programme on environment was remarkable in more than one respect. In the first place the need for such a programme was perceived rather early, in 1970, and a decision to work on it was taken in earnest. Then the effort was pursued with perseverance despite the fact that initial views differed greatly about its objectives and the best ways to proceed. Two decades later it had built the instruments for a new field of European official statistics.

[5] For more details, see Kahnert and Maurer (1992).
[6] For results obtained, see *Statistical Journal* (1989).
[7] See *Statistical Journal* (1988).

In the early 1970s some statisticians were eager to respond quickly to the frequent request for regular evaluation of a Gross National Product corrected for changes in the environment. Some others were pleading for the establishment of accounts registering the value of natural resources. This would have been a first step toward evaluation of a corrected GNP. But it was also premature and would have de facto distracted attention from efforts aimed at answering requests for detailed data on the various aspects of the environment.

Confronted with a new, obviously complex, domain many statisticians were perplexed. They did not see what conceptual apparatus to apply. They wondered whether a framework ought not to be defined first, within which a systematic search for data would be organised later. Some were tempted to wait and see, others argued that statistical developments had to anticipate predictable future needs. This diversity of attitudes had to be overcome pragmatically.

This was achieved in a conference, held in January 1978, which marked a real turning point. The work programme was organised in three sub-areas, to which the Conference attached equal importance: (i) research on relevant frameworks for environment statistics; (ii) definition of concepts, classifications and recommendations in individual areas; (iii) consideration of methodological problems encountered in environment statistics. Implementation of this scheme showed that it made sense but also led to a revision of the orientations under the two first headings. The first sub-area then turned into a project on environment indicators. The second had to concentrate on classifications, because those initially proposed soon showed shortcomings in empirical investigations (five classifications were drafted). Finally experience revealed the enormous wealth of methodological problems raised by environment statistics, where methods have to be essentially different from what they are in traditional statistics (the seminars on methodology held from 1981 to 1988 examined and discussed about a hundred papers).

***Promoting East-West statistical comparisons***

In general during the period under review, Western official statisticians had many opportunities for international exchanges. Besides the Conference they entertained bilateral relations and they were meeting for instance at OECD or Eurostat. But the UN Economic Commission for Europe and its Conference of European Statisticians were providing a unique opportunity to our Eastern colleagues.

East-West professional exchanges were notoriously subject to political and administrative constraints. These concerned in particular the dissemination of Eastern statistics since, even for such traditional data as those on energy, publication was often very partial and selective. Constraints also concerned technical issues, because statistics were embedded in a command and control system. For instance data on industrial productions were coming directly from the centralization of firms' accounts by planning authorities : they were limited to what the accounts were recording, with the definitions imposed by the planners and with a variable degree of misreporting.

Aware of these constraints Western statisticians had chosen a strategy of transparency and adaptation. They openly discussed their problems, concerning for instance non-responses in surveys or the lack of timeliness of their industrial statistics. They did not challenge their Eastern Colleagues, for instance when the latter were claiming their industrial statistics to be complete, accurate and available as definitive figures a few days after the end of the last month. But, where possible, Western statisticians were available for professional work in common. They even went ahead with East-West comparison projects.

This attitude paid off. As Kahnert and Maurer (1992) wrote (p. 10) : "The Conference has managed… to stay relatively away from the political ambience that tended to influence particularly the work of international institutions in Europe. The factor of prime importance for this success probably was the focus on matters of professional statistics that enabled the Conference to continue discussion even when discussion on other more general aspects of cooperation proved difficult or even impossible".

The outcome of this common work was not negligible, even from the Western point of view. It led to a better knowledge of Eastern statistics (Statistical Journal, 1982). It gave instruments for using them, particularly when the series Statistical Standard and Studies published correspondence tables between the Eastern and Western Standard International Classifications, for the products in 1982 (N° 32) and for the industrial and other activities in 1986 (n° 38).

At the aggregate level the national accounts of Eastern countries were organised, in the immediate post-war, according to the Material Product System (MPS) that had been developed in the Soviet Union. The many differences from the SNA resulted in a major hindrance, that the Conference naturally aimed at lowering. This began in 1958 with the agreement to set up an expert group to study the comparability between the two main systems used in Europe. From that time on, the Conference and the Statistical Commission were informed of the development of MPS at the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The interchange seems to be reflected in the fact that this development somewhat improved the comparability with SNA (Statistical Journal, 1987).

Linking the two accounting systems was a major concern which stimulated work not only under the auspices of the Conference, but often also in the countries or at the UN Statistical Commission. The conceptual differences were identified. Definition of a common aggregate, "total consumption of the population", was tested on actual data in the statistical offices of Hungary and the United Kingdom, the results being published in 1963 as n° 1 of Statistical Standards and Studies. A conceptual framework for inter-system aggregate comparisons was developed and published with conversion tables in 1977 as a UN methodological documents.

However, this did not suffice for transposition of figures from one system to the other. More information was needed about the actual practices of those applying the respective systems. Knowing that in other contexts bilateral comparisons had been instructive, Hungary and France volunteered in 1979 to test the conceptual framework. The experiment showed that the analysis had to be fairly detailed in order that the comparisons be reliable. Systematic use of input-output tables

turned out to be helpful in revealing different stages for the conversion of one system into the other and in guaranteeing consistency of adjustments that had to be made at each stage. Other similar efforts were pursued.

More or less independently of accounting systems, the Conference has also a long tradition in organised bilateral comparisons, which led to rather high quality results because they gave rise to substantial efforts, often to special surveys, in the participating countries. Those concerning the ICP project were already mentioned here when the methodological aspect of the work of the Conference was stressed. Another important objective was comparing levels of industrial labour productivity, which involved in the mid-sixties three pairs of countries : Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia-Hungary, and Czechoslovakia-France (see Statistical Standards and Studies, n° 21 and 24).

Covering such a long period in a necessarily brief survey is obviously a challenge, which cannot be fully met. However, this should suffice as a testimony of the breadth and depth of the contribution brought by the Conference to European official statistics.

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## CHAPTER 4

# The Development and Achievements of the Conference up to the 1990s: the Point of View of Countries of Eastern Europe[1]

Throughout the whole period of the cold war the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) provided a forum for official statisticians from the two groups of countries, i.e. from the countries with market economies (MEs), which included the countries of Western Europe but also the USA and Canada, and from the countries with centrally planned economies (CPEs), which included former USSR and those countries of Central and Eastern Europe with a socialist orientation. The profound differences in the organisation of the economy and society of these two groups of countries had a considerable impact on many aspects of their statistical activities, including organisation, methodology, sources of data, dissemination of information and so forth. Thus, in the CPEs the dominant role of official statistics was to establish the database for planning and to monitor the fulfillment of state plans. As a result, the statistical methodology often replicated the methodology of compilation of planning figures. As a rule, the CPEs did not apply international standards in statistics developed by international organisations; this was particularly true in the case of economic classifications. Certain aspects of the statistical information produced by statistical offices of the CPEs was not made public and was considered confidential. On the other hand, statistics in the MEs always provided a basis for economic analysis and policy-making; they were also used for research and for informing society at large.

Another important difference between the statistics of the CPEs and the MEs related to the sources of primary data. In the CPEs there existed a comprehensive compulsory reporting system and all enterprises, organisations and agencies were obliged to submit their records to statistical offices; the role of sample surveys was a rather limited one. In the MEs, although the records of enterprises were also used as a source of information, the bulk of primary data was usually obtained from various sample surveys, economic censuses and administrative sources.

The CPEs and MEs had different systems of national accounting: the MEs employed the system of national accounts (SNA) whereas the CPEs used the material product system (MPS). As described in detail below, these systems differed in respect to their underlying concepts, definitions and classifications. Due to peculiarities in the institutional set-up, there were also significant differences in the organisation and methodology of price statistics, labour statistics, balance of payments and government finance statistics. But despite these differences in statistics and in socio-economic models of their societies, official statisticians from the CPEs and MEs regularly met at the meetings of the CES and its working parties to discuss a wide range of topics of international

[1] This chapter was written by Mikhail Korolev and Youri Ivanov (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

statistics, to share their experiences in developing new methods and in solving various problems, to exchange data and to cooperate on a number of projects. So, broadly speaking, the history of the CES during the cold war period is the history of cooperation in statistics between the MEs and the CPEs.

The CPEs always paid a great deal of attention to their participation in the work of the CES. The objectives they pursued in this context were manifold. They included:

- achieving international comparability of various indicators characterizing economic development of socialist and capitalist countries;

- propagating their achievements in the development of their national statistical systems, sharing their experience in dealing with various issues (such propagation was often seen as an important political objective);

- obtaining technical knowledge essential in the context of their efforts to improve their own statistical methodology and organisation of statistics;

- active participation in selected projects; this objective and attitude became especially pronounced after the adoption of the Helsinki Act on security and cooperation in Europe which envisaged, amongst other things, cooperation in the field of statistics. The choice of projects for cooperation was nevertheless carefully made and reflected both political and practical considerations. Cooperation in statistics within the framework of the CES was always considered by the CPEs in a broad political context; it was believed that interaction in the field of statistics should facilitate cooperation in other areas such as foreign trade, science and technology and so forth.

It should be noted that the recommendations and findings of the CES had a considerable impact on the statistical activities and methodology of the CPEs. There are many examples of this impact but the most important ones relate to work in the field of compilation of input-output tables, national accounting, international comparisons of GDP and purchasing power parities, census of population, environmental statistics, the use of computers for statistical purposes, integration of social and demographic statistics and energy statistics.

Most of the CPEs were very attentive to the compilation of input-output tables and there were numerous applications of the results of this work. For example, in the former USSR the work in this area initiated in the 1960s was intended not only to enhance economic analysis and secure useful detailed information for benchmark years, but also to improve planning of the economy. The CPEs accumulated considerable experience in this area. Nevertheless, in the course of planning the work in this area they were keen to study international experience and international guidelines in general, prepared within the framework of the CES. Input-output tables were a particularly important item of work of the CES in the framework of the discussion of the revision of SNA 1953; integration of the input-output tables into the SNA was a topic of special interest for the CPEs.

With regard to work in the field of national accounting, there were several aspects of interest to the CPEs. First of all, they were interested in discussions of the various issues of the MPS and they felt strongly that the SNA and the MPS were two alternative systems and therefore should be treated equally; and indeed on a number of occasions the CES discussed the results of the efforts by the CPEs to improve and expand the MPS. Such discussions took place, for example, at the thirty-second session (1984) of the CES and at the twelfth session (1986) of the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances.

Secondly, they were interested in gaining knowledge of solutions of relatively technical problems of compilation of the SNA such as, for example, the methods of computation of GDP and its components in constant prices, the procedures used for reconciliation of various accounts, different types of underlying classifications and so on. Such knowledge of technical matters was deemed to be useful in the context of the efforts undertaken by the CPEs to improve the methodology of compilation of the MPS (despite the important differences between the SNA and the MPS, there were also many similarities between them).

Thirdly, they were interested in expanding the scope of economic analysis and achieving the international comparability of major indicators. In this context mention should be made of the introduction in the 1970s in national accounting of the CPEs of "the system of indicators of non-material services" (SINS) which described the output and cost structure of non-material services. The SINS originally developed by the Standing Commission on Statistics of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) was intended to supplement the conventional MPS in order to enlarge the scope of economic analysis and facilitate international comparisons; the SINS was seen as an instrument of for deriving the GDP of the CPEs. Therefore, the overall structure of the SINS and its underlying definitions were to a considerable extent influenced by the SNA 1968. The SINS was discussed at the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances of the CES. the Working Party took note of the SINS and expressed the view that it would be useful in bringing the two systems closer to each other. It should be noted that the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances was set up in March of 1965 and the work was organised into four working groups: Working group on activity and commodity classifications; Working group on public sector; Working group on links between SNA and MPS; Working group on consumption expenditure.

Another priority project pursued by the CES which should be mentioned in this context refers to environmental statistics; the principle objective of work in this area was to work out methodological principles of the system of environmental indicators and related standard classifications. The former USSR and other CPEs actively participated in this project; suffice to say that a representative of the former USSR prepared the draft classification of solid wastes. Hungary cooperated with Finland and Sweden on studying methodological problems of various aspects of environmental statistics. The work of the CES in this area had a considerable impact on the development of national environmental statistics of the CPEs. The delegations from the CPEs, which participated in the sessions of the CES, on many occasions expressed their support of the work in the field of environmental statistics; in particular, they very much appreciated the experimental compendium on environmental statistics in Europe and North America released in

1987. An international seminar on environmental statistics was held in Poland in 1980 in accordance with a decision by the CES. The work of the CES on environmental statistics was acknowledged on several occasions by the UN Statistical Commission and gained a reputation of international significance.

The censuses of population and housing were discussed by the CES a number of times. "Recommendations for the 1990 censuses of population and housing in the ECE region" was drawn up at the meetings on population and housing censuses convened over the 1984-87 period under the programme of work of the CES and the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning of the Economic Commission for Europe. The experts from the CPEs made substantial contributions to the work on this document. The recommendations were extensively used by the former USSR and other CPEs in preparation of their censuses; in particular, special attention was paid to the section of this document dealing with the "topics for 1990 population and housing censuses" for which the data were to be collected. A seminar on censuses of population was held in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1989; applications of results of censuses and related issues were discussed there, and the seminar recommended that the CES should publish the major results of the censuses carried out in the region of the ECE in 1990.

Integration of social and demographic statistics was another important project pursued by the CES; one of the principle objectives of the project was coordination and harmonisation of the definitions and classifications used in various fields of social and demographic statistics. The project was of interest to the CPEs and they participated in and contributed to the discussion of various issues. In this context, mention should be made of the bilateral comparison of socio-demographic indicators carried out by Austria and Czechoslovakia, the results of which were presented to the thirty-fifth plenary session of the CES. The work in this area had an impact on the system of socio-demographic indicators developed by the Standing Commission on Statistics of the CMEA - the international organisation of the CPEs - for its member states. It should be noted that the secretariats of the ECE and the CMEA cooperated on a number of topics and it was generally understood that this cooperation was important for the exchange of information and ideas.

Some CPEs such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland participated in the project on comparison of income of households. In 1988 a project on comparison of distribution of income was launched with the active participation of Hungary and the Netherlands. The main objective of the project was to acquire methodological experience in comparison of distribution of income in countries with different socio-economic systems and different levels of economic development; thus, the focus of the project was on the study of methodological problems and the search for possible solutions. These methodological problems referred to the concept of income, the impact of the institutional differences on relative level of income, the categories of recipients and classification of households. The report on this project was discussed at the thirty-seventh plenary session of the CES, which noted that the experience obtained in carrying out the study was very instructive.

The former USSR and other CPEs were interested and actively participated in the inter-country Project on the use of computers for statistical purposes and the design and development of an automated statistical information system (also known as Statistical Computing Project). Particular attention in the context of this project was paid to the work on evaluation of software; the first meeting of the Joint Group on Software Evaluation was held in Hungary in 1988. In this context a special mention should be made of Guidelines and Standards for Evaluation of Microcomputer Software finalized in 1990 by the Joint Group on Software Evaluation. The database Statistical Microcomputer Software Inventory (STATWARE-1) was also released. Among other important matters dealt with in the context of this project, mention should also be made of communication, statistical data base management, data editing, tabulation and implementation strategy. Special Joint Groups were set up to deal with these matters. Active participation of the CPEs in the work of the Working Party on Electronic Data Processing should also be mentioned; the Working Party dealt with a wide range of topics pertaining to the application of computers for processing statistical information as well as to the development of new technologies in this area.

There were a number of other important projects pursued in the framework of the CES which were of special interest to the CPEs and in which they took a particularly active part and made substantial contributions. The text below is intended to highlight such projects.

One of these central projects refers to the study of links between the system of national accounts (SNA) and the system of material product (MPS). This topic was on the agenda of the CES for a long period and it was discussed a number of times both at the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances and at the plenary sessions of the CES. On many occasions the representatives of the CPEs expressed their views that this project should be carried out on a priority basis. The project had certain political connotations because it implied cooperation between the West and the East.

The MPS was originally developed in the USSR in the 1920s and was designed to depict the economy (at macro level) based on the state property on means of production, centralized distribution of resources and central planning. After the Second World War the other CPEs adopted the MPS. The unified description of the MPS was prepared by the Standing Commission on Statistics of the CMEA in the 1960s. This document was discussed at the session of the UN Statistical Commission and published by the United Nations Secretariat as the official UN document. Thus, the MPS was de facto recognized in the UN as an alternative system of national accounting to the SNA.

In the earlier stages of work carried out within the framework of the CES on the study of the SNA/ MPS links, the focus was on the analysis and description of the inter-system differences; attempts were also made to link the corresponding aggregates of the two systems. The list of terms used in the SNA and MPS was released in English, Russian and French.

The discussion of the SNA/MPS links at the CES resulted in the identification of i) conceptual differences, ii) incidental differences and iii) institutional differences.

The conceptual differences are largely associated with different definitions of economic production in the two systems, and their impact on the international comparability of the corresponding aggregates of the two systems was most significant. The incidental differences arise due to the fact that the SNA and the MPS were developed independently from each other and as a result some relatively unimportant flows were treated or classified differently. The institutional differences are associated with the differences in the organisation of the economy.

The analysis of the inter-system differences made it possible to work out conversion procedures and to construct conversion tables which described the specific steps needed to link the corresponding aggregates of the two systems. The conversion tables were tested in the course of some bilateral exercises carried out by countries using the SNA and the MPS, for example, by Finland and Bulgaria, by Finland and Czechoslovakia, by Hungary and France; the results of these tests were presented to the CES. In this context, mention should also be made of the work on the conversion of the national accounts of Yugoslavia in terms of the SNA. The CES (thirty-seventh plenary session) was informed on the results of this work. The study of the SNA/MPS links facilitated the eventual transition from the MPS to the SNA.

In the late 1980s, the work on studying links between the SNA and the MPS focused on harmonization of the two systems of national accounting; the purpose of harmonization was to bring the two systems of national accounting closer to each other by eliminating incidental differences in the course of the revision of both systems. At the same time some experts were of the view that the SNA and the MPS should be sufficiently flexible that they could be used in countries with different socio-economic systems; it was believed that this requirement should be taken into consideration in the process of revision of both systems. The importance of adaptation of the SNA to conditions of the CPEs was emphasized.

Though the experts from the CPEs could not contribute significantly to the work on revision of the SNA (both in connection with elaboration of the SNA 1968 and the SNA 1993), this project pursued within the framework of the CES was of considerable interest to the centrally-planned economies for a number of reasons. Though all CPEs continued to compile the MPS throughout the whole period of the cold war, statistical offices of some CPEs came to the conclusion in the middle of the 1980s that computation of selected aggregates of the SNA, and, above all, the GDP would be useful for economic analysis and should supplement the aggregates of the MPS. For this reason statisticians from the CPEs were keen to study the underlying concepts and definitions of the SNA as well as the methods of computation of the GDP both in current and constant prices (and changes introduced in the SNA as a result of revision). They were also interested in discussion of such controversial topics as deflation of the value of non-market services, calculation and allocation of the output of financial intermediaries, etc. In the middle of the 1980s, some CPEs (e.g. Hungary, the USSR) started publishing estimates of GDP; the methodology of these estimates was, by and large, consistent with the SNA 1968. The CES underlined the importance of this development; the

latter was recognized as an important step towards achieving better international comparability of data between countries with different socio-economic systems.

At the same time, the concept of "integrated system of macro economic indicators of the SNA and the MPS" was developed and discussed at the CES. The integrated system in question, as viewed by some statisticians, represented a system of national accounting in the framework of which a clear distinction between the flows of material goods and non-material services was systematically made. This arrangement made it possible to derive from the same framework of accounts both the major aggregates of the SNA and the MPS which supplement each other in a meaningful way. It was hoped that integration would result in the availability of more comparable macro-economic data. The concept of an integrated system was discussed at some length at the fourteenth session of the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances and at the thirty-seventh plenary session of the CES (12-16 June 1989). The existence of various interpretations of the concept of integration of the two systems of national accounting was noted. Some experts held the view that integration should be the ultimate objective of work on the study of SNA/MPS links. The prevailing view was, however, that the "the two systems of national accounting would continue to exist in the future". Most participants of the discussion of this topic agreed that "integration should aim at specific procedures for minimizing differences between the two accounting systems".

In this context the work on development of the concept of "total consumption of the population" should be mentioned. This concept (originally suggested by the statisticians of Hungary) was defined to include all consumer goods and services acquired by households from all sources (e.g. purchases of goods and services, goods received in kind from own production and as remuneration for work done, social transfers in kind, and so forth.). This concept was considered an important instrument of the international comparisons of final consumption of households in countries with market and centrally planned economies because the comparative figures on total consumption were largely invariant of the peculiarities in the institutional set-up. It should be noted that the results of comparison of total consumption of population of Czechoslovakia and Finland were discussed at the 14th session of the Working Party on National Accounts and Balances (16-19 May 1989) and were later approved by the thirty-seventh plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians. It is worth noting that the concept of total consumption of the population was transformed later into the concept of actual final consumption of households, which is an important aggregate of the SNA-93 .In this context, mention should also be made of the comparative analysis of social expenditure and its finance undertaken by Austria and Poland. This analysis was approved by the CES (thirty-seventh plenary session); the latter noted that the two countries should continue this work, presumably with the involvement of additional countries.

Organisation of statistics and exchange of experience in this field was an important topic of work of the CES and was discussed a number of times. In this context, special mention should be made of the high-level seminar on this topic held in Moscow in 1981 under the auspices of the CES.

International comparisons of the GDP and purchasing power parities (PPPs) was still another priority project in which the CPEs participated and made important contributions. Since the

phase IV (reference year 1980), the ICP was organised on a regional basis. The European Comparison Programme (ECP) was launched in June 1979 at the twenty-seventh plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians as a programme of "European Comparison within the ICP". The first round of the ECP was carried out for the benchmark year 1980.

The countries with centrally planned economies participated in the ICP starting from the first phases (1970 and 1973 – Hungary, 1975 – Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia) but participated actively in the ECP when a Special Group for the CPEs (so-called Group II of the ECP) was set up.

The comparisons within Group II, in which Austria was also included as a bridge country, were rather complicated exercises because they concerned countries with different types of socio–economic systems, different types of organisation of economy, with different statistical systems (the CPEs versus Austria). The baskets of consumer products as well as investment goods were also very different. To obtain reliable results of comparisons within Group II, a number of methodological and practical problems had to be solved. These referred, first of all, to the following fields:

- Classifications (SNA versus MPS);
- Item list and quality adjustments;
- Non-market services.

The preparation of the list of product representatives was the most difficult area of comparisons, taking into account the availability and characteristics of the individual items, differences in the quality of the compared goods and services, different types of outlets. Nevertheless, this problem was solved. Table 1 below contains a summary of volume indices of GDP per capita (Austria = 100) for the CPEs which participated in the different rounds of the ECP (1980, 1985, 1990 benchmark years).

**Table 1**

**GDP volume indices per capita (Austria = 100) in different rounds of the ECP**

| | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| CSFR | — | — | 50 |
| Hungary | 54 | 47 | 38 |
| Poland | 50 | 37 | 30 |
| Romania | — | — | 21 |
| USSR | — | — | 41 |
| Yugoslavia | 47 | 44 | 33 |

Participation of the CPEs in the ECP provided a basis for achieving better East-West comparison of real product and PPPs.

It should be noted that the CPEs had their own project similar to the ICP and ECP. This project was carried out under the auspices of the Standing Commission on Statistics of the CMEA and envisaged comparisons of the Net Material Product (the MPS principal aggregate), capital investments, industrial and agricultural output and respective PPPs. Considerable experience was accumulated in this area. Nevertheless, statisticians of the CPEs involved in this work were keen to study the experience gained as a result of implementation of the ICP and ECP. It would be an exaggeration to say that the ICP and ECP considerably influenced the work of the CMEA in this area.

Economic classifications and their harmonisation was an important topic for statisticians from the CPEs and they made a contribution to it. In this context, special mention should be made of the work carried out within the framework of the CES on "correspondence table between the Standard International Trade Classification of the United Nations (SITC) and the Standard Foreign Trade Classification of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (SFTC)". The decision to construct the correspondence table between the UN and the CMEA classifications of foreign trade was taken by the CES at its eighteenth plenary session in June 1970. A test of the draft correspondence table for the conversion of SFTC data into SITC categories was carried out by Austria and Hungary based on the reclassification of the data relating to Hungarian foreign trade with Austria in 1978. At its twenty-ninth plenary session (June 1981) the CES approved the publication by the secretariat of the correspondence table as finalized on the basis of the results of the test and of additional comments from interested countries and international organisations. Considering the recurrent changes and additions to the basic classifications, the CES agreed to the regular updating of the correspondence table. In this context, mention should also be made of the work on linking the ISIC (International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities) and the Classification by Branches of National Economy developed by the CMEA. The conversion key between the two classifications was tested by Bulgaria and Finland. The draft conversion key was discussed at the thirty-second plenary session of the CES; the latter asked the secretariat of the ECE to publish the conversion key.

Foreign trade statistics was discussed at the meetings of the CES a number of times in different contexts and the CPEs usually participated. Thus, in 1990 the CMEA submitted to the thirty-eighth plenary session of the CES the report entitled "Some lines of further development in the statistical methodology of foreign trade of CMEA member countries". The report contained, among other things, a comparative analysis of the methodology applied in foreign trade statistics of the CMEA member countries and the methodology adopted by the UN.

At the thirty-eighth plenary session of the CES (held in 1990) one of the issues which was of paramount importance for the former centrally planned economies dealt with the requirements and plans of the statistical offices of countries in transition. The discussion was based on the report of the seminar on the problems of statistical offices of the countries in transition held in May 1990 in

Geneva. The importance of work on introduction of the SNA into the regular practice of the transition economies was emphasized. It was recognized that implementation of the SNA would influence transformation in other branches of economic statistics. It was also noted that the procedures of collection of primary data should be transformed in transition economies. The importance of work on the introduction of registers of enterprises in order to accommodate sample surveys was also noted. It was recommended that statistical offices of countries in transition should use existing international standard classifications and nomenclatures as a starting point for development of national classifications. Taking into account the growing involvement of many international organisations in the solution of problems of countries in transition, the Conference emphasized the importance of coordination of activities in this field. The Conference also emphasized the importance of socio-demographic statistics for monitoring and analysis of transformations in countries in transition. The Conference noted the importance of surveys in the field of unemployment and standard of living.

To summarize briefly, the CPEs greatly benefited from participation in the work of the CES in many respects and, above all, in terms of improving their statistical methodology in a number of areas (input-output tables, national accounting, environmental statistics, censuses of population, use of computers for statistical purposes and so forth). On the other hand, they made a considerable contribution to a number of important projects of the CES such as study of links between the SNA and the MPS, international comparisons of GDP and PPPs, economic classifications, comparisons of distribution of income of households. It is worth noting that the MEs also benefited from cooperation with the CPEs. They obtained useful information on the methodology and organisation of statistics of the CPEs. One important result of participation of the CPEs in the work of the CES was the gradual expansion of the volume of statistical information published by them in various editions and provided to the secretariat of the ECE. Thus, the cooperation between the CPEs and MEs in the framework of the CES, despite some constraints associated with the post Second World War period and the differences in organisation of their societies and statistics, was remarkably successful. The interaction of the CPEs and the MEs was important in the context of the efforts by the Conference to carry out its major functions.

## CHAPTER 5

# The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: the Breakthrough of a New Era[1]

The year 1989 was clearly one of the great turning points in the history of Europe and even of humanity. The in-depth changes in the economic, social and political structure of Central and Eastern European transition countries that began during the second part of 1989 are described in detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Most of these changes had important consequences, not only in the organisation of statistical systems, but also in the statistical paradigm itself.

In modern democracies, it is largely admitted that free access to statistical information is one important constituent of the citizen's Right to Information, necessary for an efficient functioning of these democracies. On the other hand, the essential confidence in official statistics of all categories of users can be reached only if all stakeholders accept certain ethical rules and good practices, so that suppliers of raw data respond favourably to the requests for information placed on them by statistical offices. That means that the statistical community has to get and promote a set of ethical principles and good practices. It also means that governments have to create an adequate environment and to provide a fair juridical and budgetary framework to produce and disseminate statistical data meeting all users' needs and not only their own needs.

Building such a set of ethical principles and good practices was a long and difficult process. During the 20 years after the end of the 2nd World War (1945 – 1965), statistical legislation put the accent mainly on confidentiality and protection of individual data and co-ordination of statistical systems; but there were no real discussions between producers and users about the content of statistical programmes, and occasional pressures on NSOs had sometimes affected the integrity of official statistics and hampered the necessary professional autonomy of official statisticians. During the following 25 years (1965 - 1989), statistical offices gradually shifted from a supply-driven strategy for providing statistics to a demand-driven statistical strategy; National Statistical Councils were created in a number of countries and official statisticians started to discuss with their users the best strategies for disseminating and pricing statistical information and more generally the role of statistics that are produced as a service to society. In parallel, as a reaction of the society in front of the EDP developments, commissions or ombudsmen, aimed at strengthening protection of the privacy and confidentiality of individual data, were implemented in many European countries.

One of the first attempts to formalise ethical rules for statisticians was certainly the ASA Code of Conduct for Statisticians adopted in 1979 by the American Statistical Association under the leadership of W. Edwards Deming (now, after a revision in 1989, the ASA Ethical Guidelines for

[1] This chapter was written by Jean-Louis Bodin (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

Statistical Practice). W. E. Deming was also one of the promoters of the Committee of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) that prepared the ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics adopted during the Centenary Session of the ISI held in Amsterdam in 1985.

These two codes are very general and apply not only to official statisticians but also to the statistical community at large (academic statisticians, researchers, statisticians working in industry, etc.) and don't take into account two specific characteristics of official statistics:

- official statisticians do not work for a specific consumer or a small group of users; they receive public funds to be at the service of the society at large and to contribute in their domain to the Citizen's Right to Information

- the individual's Right to Privacy very often conflicts with the society's Right to Information (in order to know its collective characteristics).

In the 80s, it had therefore appeared useful and necessary to complete these general ethical codes by others concerning more specifically official statistics. In some countries, official statisticians tried to produce some specific Codes of Ethics by themselves (e.g. the 'Code de Déontologie Statistique' produced in France in 1984 by the professional association of INSEE[2] staff).

During this period, in the former centrally planned economies, the main duty of statisticians was to check that the most important economic results were in accordance with the requirements of the Central Planning Authority. To this end, statisticians were in charge of a huge national bookkeeping activity. The ministries in charge of economic sectors requested individual information while no real decision was taken at the level of the production units. In that way, statisticians' tasks were very different in centrally planned economies and market economies of Western Europe and North America (see Figures 1 and 2). After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist systems, the market-oriented system obliged a far greater number of people with economic and social responsibilities in society to take decisions. Such decisions implied the use of an adequate information system and, in particular, sound and relevant statistical information. Moreover, it was vital for statisticians to gain the confidence of the public in the information they were to produce.

[2] INSEE: Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, i.e. the French Central Statistical Office).

**Figure 1: Data flows in centrally planned economies**

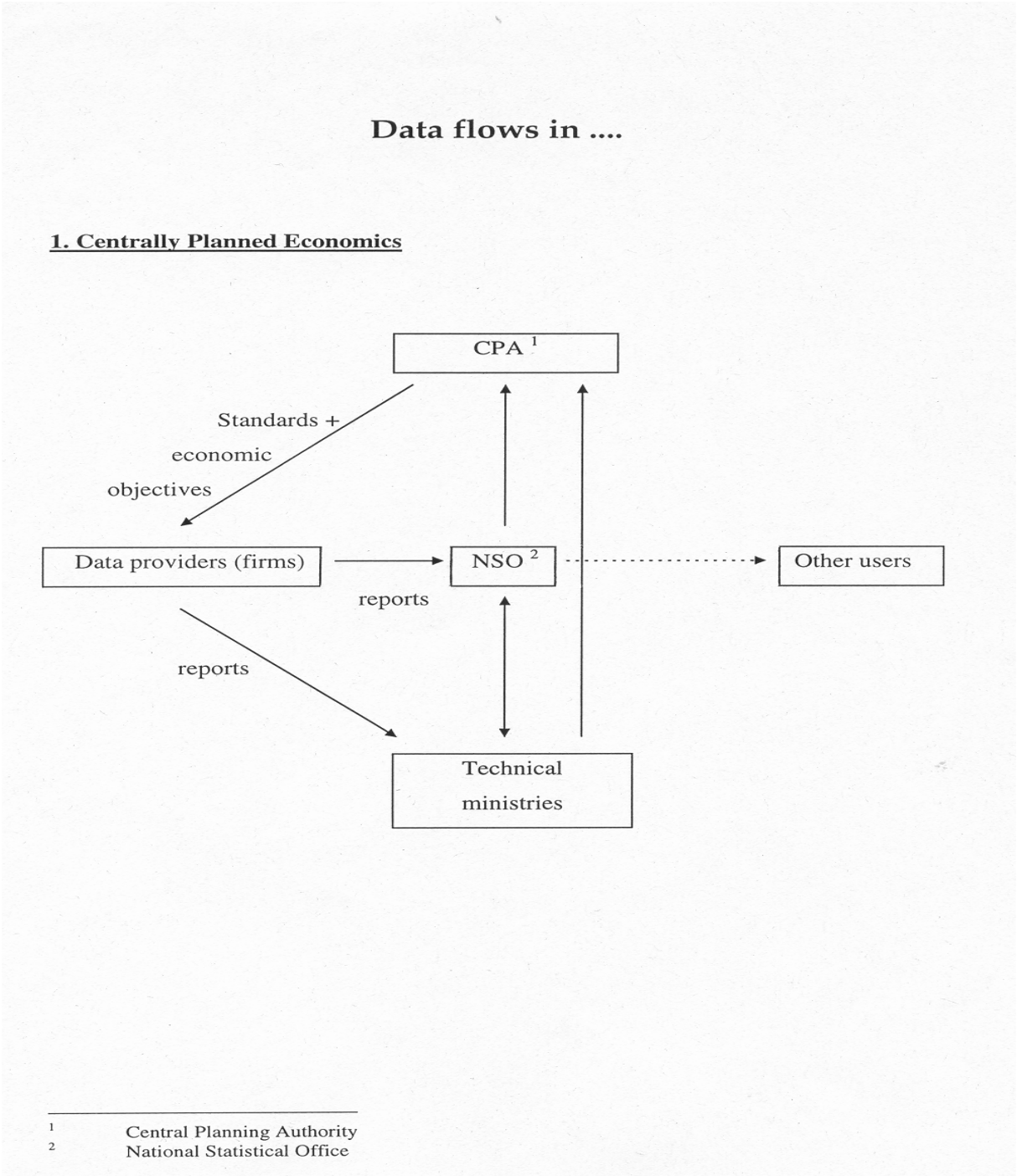
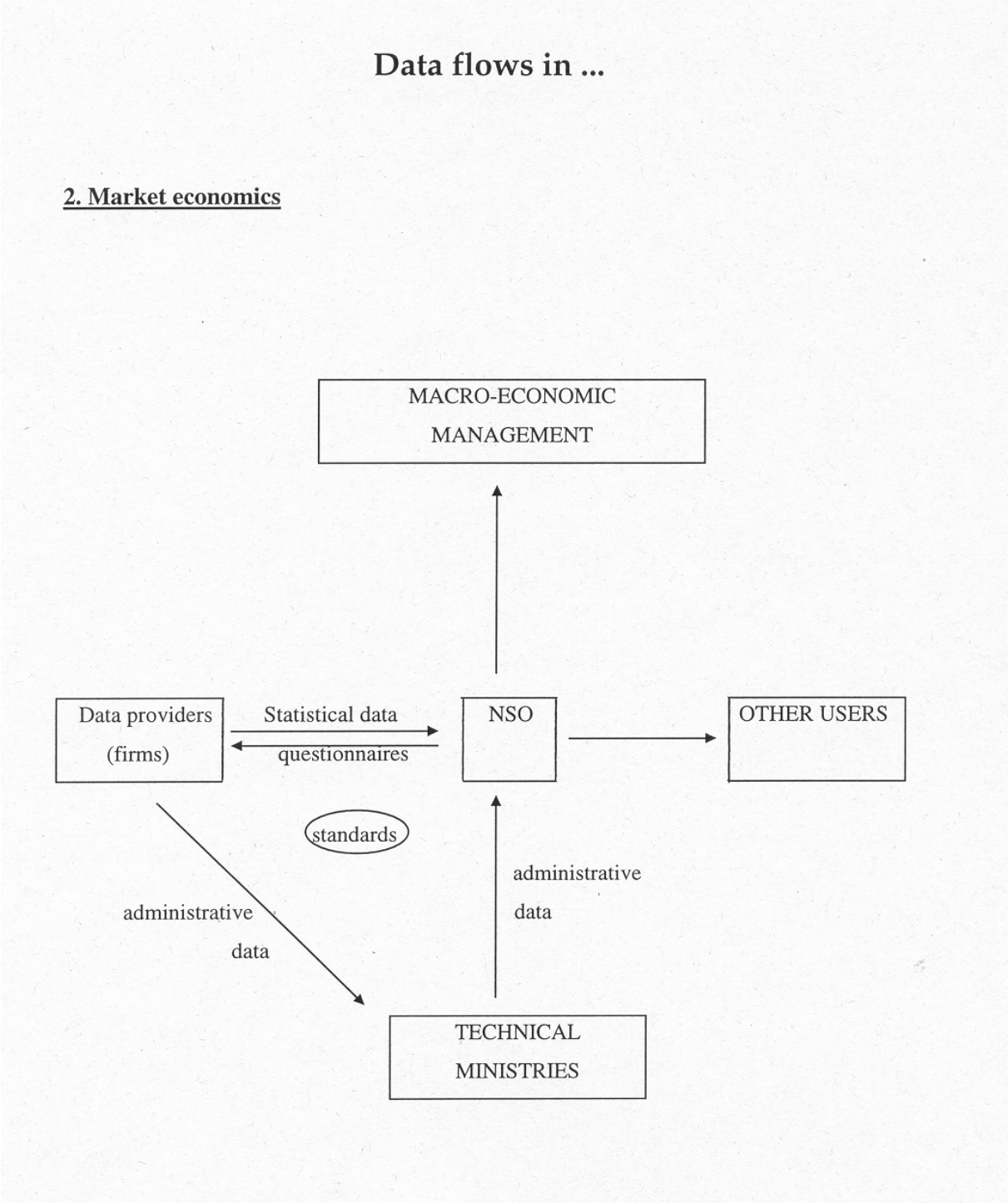


**Figure 2: Data flows in market economies**



In the late months of 1989 and the early months of 1990, statisticians from Central and Eastern Europe were fully aware that it was not so easy to face this new challenge and to gain this indispensable trust of the public. They were looking for new references, new landmarks, to serve as a framework in which to fulfil their duties. Such references were maybe not so different from the strictly technical point of view, but totally different where the concept itself of the role of statisticians in society was concerned. They recognised that economic and social statistics should be both legitimate and credible, i.e. that they should satisfy the following criteria:

- Impartiality: they should be produced in an objective and independent way, removed from any pressure coming from political or other interest groups, particularly regarding the choice of techniques, definitions, concepts and methodologies;

- Reliability: they should reflect as closely as possible the reality they represent; to this end, only scientific criteria should be used to select the sources, methods and procedures that are used;

- Relevance: statistics should be compiled only if they meet recognised needs for a large variety of users;

- Transparency: official authorities in charge of the collection and production of statistics should also make public all information on the sources, methods and procedures, as well as on the laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical system operates.

The reaction of the statistical community to this concern was very rapid (see Table 1 for a chronological listing of the main events concerning the History of Fundamental Principles). No later than November, 1989, a meeting was organised under the auspices of Eurostat on the consequences of the PHARE programme on statistical co-operation. The CES Bureau decided to organised two main events before the meeting of the 38th plenary session of the CES held on 11-15 June 1990: firstly a "Consultation" on 23 February 1990 the purpose of which was "to initiate a process through which the Conference would … re-consider its role" in the context of "the recent changes in the pattern of international co-operation in the region"; and secondly a "transition workshop" on 21-23 May 1990. During these meetings, the need for stating "in transition countries fundamental principles for official statistics, applicable to all countries, and particularly needed" was pointed out. The Polish delegation proposed the preparation of a draft for a "Statistical Convention" that was effectively presented during the 38th session of the CES (document CES/647). A working group was created, with Poland as lead country, and with the participation of Bulgaria, France, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Eurostat and the ISI (International Statistical Institute). This group was asked to prepare a final document to be submitted to the 39th session of the CES, taking into account "relevant results obtained by other international institutions, in particular the work done by the ISI on ethical guidelines for statisticians". The working group was also asked to look carefully at the legal status of the document and to prepare accordingly "a text that would be located as high up in the hierarchy of instruments as possible, without necessarily being a legally binding instrument".

**Table 1: Chronological list of the main events in the history of the drawing up of the Fundamental Principles**

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| | |
|---|---|
| 02/07/85 | Gorbachev is elected Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet |
| 04-18/06/89 | First "free" elections in Poland: Victory of Solidarnosc |
| **12-15/06/89** | **37th Session of the CES** |
| 18/10/89 | New Fundamental Law in Hungary |
| **Sept.- Oct./89** | **Adoption of the PHARE project by the European Commission** |
| 11/11/89 | Fall of the Berlin Wall |
| **24/11/89** | **Meeting at Eurostat: consequences of PHARE for statistical co-operation** |
| 18/11/89 | Start of the "Velvet revolution" in Czechoslovakia |
| 10/12/89 | Demonstrations in Sofia (Bulgaria) |
| 21/12/89 | Insurrection in Bucharest (Romania): Nicolae Ceaucescu runs away |
| 29/12/89 | Vaclav Havel becomes President of Czechoslovakia |
| **23/02/90** | **Consultation of the CES** |
| **22-23/05/90** | **Workshop on transition and its consequences for statistics organised by the statistical division of the UN/ECE** |
| 13/06/90 | The USSR Supreme Soviet approves the "controlled market economy" |
| **11-15/06/90** | **38th Session of the CES: decision to prepare a document on fundamental principles** |
| **13-14/09/90** | **1st Meeting of the Working Group in Paris** |
| **9-11/01/91** | **2nd Meeting of the Working Group in Warsaw** |
| **11-14/03/91** | **Seminar of the CES in Budapest (Hungary)** |
| **17-21/09/91** | **39th Session of the CES: adoption of the draft Resolution** |
| 25/06/91 | Croatia and Slovenia declare themselves independent and leave Yugoslavia |
| 19-22/08/91 | Attempted Coup in Moscow |
| 08/12/91 | Common declaration Russia-Belarus-Ukraine: USSR no longer exist as an entity in international law |
| **15/04/92** | **The 47th Session of the UN/ECE adopts the Resolution by its decision C(47)** |
| **15-19/06/92** | **40th Session of the CES** |

The working group met 3 times in Paris on 13-14 September 1990, in Warsaw on 9-11 January 1991, and in Budapest on the occasion of the Seminar for NSO Presidents on 7-8 March 1991; this third meeting was very important since it proposed to draft the document in the form of a "Resolution" insisting on the fundamental principles more than on technical statistical tools and asked a "drafting sub-committee" to try to present this resolution in the form of "Ten Commandments". The drafting sub-committee (Eurostat, France, Switzerland) met in Paris on 19 March 1991 and produced the document CES/702 that was endorsed with some amendments by the 39th session of the CES as the “Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the Region of the ECE”. While endorsing this document, the CES decided to ask its Bureau to present it for adoption by one of the Conference’s parent body, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, during its the 47th plenary session in April of 1992 and recommended to governments of the member states of the ECE that they should create a fair, juridical, institutional and budgetary infrastructure to provide the environment necessary to apply these principles.

The 47th session of the ECE warmly welcomed on 15 April 1992 this Resolution and adopted it as its Decision C(47). The Resolution therefore became a Decision of the ECE and not only a text adopted by the CES.

During a follow-up seminar held in Jachranka (Poland) on 27-29 September 1993 , Willem de Vries (CBS, the Netherlands) proposed summarising the Resolution as follows:

- Principle 1: Relevance, impartiality and equal access;
- Principle 2: Professionalism;
- Principle 3: Accountability;
- Principle 4: Prevention of misuse;
- Principle 5: Cost-effectiveness;
- Principle 6: Confidentiality;
- Principle 7: Legislation;
- Principle 8: National co-ordination;
- Principle 9: International co-ordination;
- Principle 10: International statistical co-operation.

Some of these principles are already well known to all statisticians (e.g. the principle 6 on confidentiality or the principle 8 on national co-ordination). Others are innovative and practical, not only for the transition countries that have called for the Resolution, but for the statistical community as a whole.

The first principle clearly insists on the necessity to serve all categories of users “on an impartial basis”, and on the fact that official statistics should “meet the test of practical utility”. This means that official statisticians do not have the authority to collect a given element of information simply because they have chosen to do so, or because they consider that producing such data would be “useful to society”. It is up to the society itself, and its different groups, to decide which data and

information it actually needs. National Statistical Councils may be very helpful in making such decisions.

The second, third, and seventh principles give the underlying principle of what the scientific approach of a statistician should be. This is to honour impartiality, reliability, relevance and transparency.

The fourth principle is innovative. It also confers a difficult duty on statisticians. But it gives them the protection of some kind of administrative immunity when they refer to this principle for guidance on how to comment on the misuse of statistics.

The fifth principle is a reminder to all those who must decide on a statistical programme. The need to proportion the data collected through a statistical survey to its objectives is clearly stipulated in one of the articles of the 1979 ASA Code of Conduct. It recognises that “collecting data for a statistical enquiry may impose a burden on respondents, that it may be viewed by some as an invasion of privacy, and that it often involves legitimate confidentiality considerations, statisticians should collect only the data needed for the purpose of their enquiry....”.

Finally, the ninth and tenth principles demonstrate the need for international co-operation and solidarity.

In looking at the "matters arising from the 47th session of the ECE", the 40th session of the CES held on 15-19 June 1992 "expressed its satisfaction with the approval of the ECE decision C(47)" and "reiterated its views that this decision can be considered as one of the major results of co-operation in recent years"; it "hoped that the decision would further strengthen the production of impartial statistics in the region" and "was of the opinion that decision C(47) is of universal significance". It therefore "expressed the wish that the contents of the decision be communicated by the chairman of the Conference to the UN Statistical Commission and to the other Regional Commissions of the UN".

The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination (a working group of the UN Statistical Commission) contacted the regional statistical divisions with a view to having ECE decision C(47) circulated to all countries in their regions and to obtaining their opinions concerning the possible application and usefulness at the regional and global levels of the principles set out in the decision. 61 countries replied to the round of consultations and all of them but two agreed with the ten principles, which meant that, with the 45 member countries of the ECE existing in 1993, more than 100 UN member countries were in favour of a declaration of principles and agree with the "European" principles. In these conditions, the 16th session of the Working Group, held in Geneva on 13-16 September 1993, decided to submit the resolution to a special session of the UN Statistical Commission in 1994, with just some amendments (to the preamble only, and not to the Principles themselves) aimed at deleting any reference to the European context. The Resolution was adopted at the global level in April of 1994 in New York as the UN Resolution on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

After the adoption of the Resolution by the ECE and the UN Statistical Commission, several other international or supranational organisations contributed to a strong endorsement of the principles by actively using them as a point of reference in their relations with their member countries as well as the terms of their multilateral responsibilities. Let me quote inter alia:

- The main attributes of the Special Data Dissemination Standards (SDDS) and of the General Data Dissemination Standards (GDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are directly taken from the Fundamental Principles

- For the recent wave of accession of new countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Korea, Mexico, Poland) to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the OECD Council decided to: examine the legal and institutional framework for statistics of the applicant countries; assess the quality of the statistical data available in those countries; and, ensure the applicant countries' integration in its reporting and information system upon accession, by reference to the UN Fundamental Principles.

- In the European Union's Council Regulation on Community Statistics, adopted in February 1997, the Fundamental Principles are enshrined in a specific chapter on "Principles". On the other hand, Eurostat, in its co-operation with countries in transition of Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, encourages the application of those principles in these countries and gives advice on how they can be incorporated in national statistical legislation.

- The International Labour Office (ILO) has undertaken a study of country dissemination practices for employment and unemployment statistics, with respect to dissemination of statistical information to the public. They have drafted a check-list of guidelines on good practices adopted in October 2000 by the 16th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, in order to give a much higher profile to previous ILO recommendations and to take into account the Fundamental Principles.

- In November 1999, the Consortium PARIS21 (Partnership In Statistics for Development in the 21st Century) was created in Paris by the World Bank, the UNDP and the OECD, in order to promote and strengthen statistical capacities building and best practices in developing countries.

Discussions of the Principles as well as of good practices were organised in all regions of the world, included in developing countries during the past 10 years. Some national "charters" were adopted, like the British Green Paper in 1998. The UN organised many seminars all over the world, for instance in Prague in March of 1998, in Singapore in January of 1999 and in Ulan-Bator in December of 2001, to discuss how to go from the Principles to Good Practices (and how to keep outsiders out of the systems!. A lot of papers and articles were presented in seminars, conferences, and congresses or edited in statistical journals (see Bibliography). The Ten Commandments are, ten

years after their adoption by the ECE, a world reference that no government, no statistician and no citizen can ignore.

The transition towards the market economy was of course the major event in the world during these 15 past years. It did not only happen in Central and Eastern Europe but also in many different countries, like China and Vietnam. Some other major changes are transforming our world at the dawn of the 21st century:

- The globalisation of the markets driven by progress in transport and communication technology, the liberalisation of trade, investments and financial markets and a change in enterprise organisation and strategy, result in an interdependence of national economies; on one side, certain national instruments (e.g. fiscal and monetary policies) are becoming less effective and, on the other, certain domestic policies (industrial, social and environmental standards) are assuming an international dimension;

- A new conception of the role of States: "less direct management, more regulatory activities";

- In many parts of the world, economic (and sometimes monetary) and political integration areas have been created; of course the most integrated area is the European Union, but there is also integration in Asia, e.g. with the creation of the ASEAN, in Latin America with the MERCOSUR or in Africa with the UEMOA;

- The rapid technological evolution, especially in the field of new information technologies and the increasing weight of the invisible services (intangibles);

- It is also increasingly clear that it will be impossible to attain sustainable growth only through means of economic growth, but that human development, respect for the natural environment and respect for democratic rights are equally important.

The consequences of these changes for the production and dissemination of statistical data are obviously very important. The UN Resolution on Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics has certainly played a major role in the implementation of these consequences.

***Text of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the ECE Region***

*Resolution C(47), as adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its 47th session in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 15th of April 1992:*

The Economic Commission for Europe,

Bearing in mind that official statistical information is an essential basis for development in the economic, demographic, social and environmental fields and for mutual knowledge and trade among the States and peoples of the region,

Bearing in mind that the essential trust of the public in official statistical information depends to a large extent on respect for the fundamental values and principles which are the basis of any democratic society which seeks to understand itself and to respect the rights of its members,

Bearing in mind that the quality of official statistics, and thus the quality of the information available to the Government, the economy and the public depends largely on the co-operation of citizens, enterprises and other respondents in providing appropriate data needed for necessary statistical compilations,

Recalling the general provisions and standards adopted to this end by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention of the Council of Europe of 28th January 1991 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Final Declaration of the Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe,

Recalling the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations active in statistics to establish standards and concepts to allow comparisons among countries,

Recalling also the International Statistical Institute Declaration of Professional Ethics,

Having taken cognisance of the consensus reached within the Conference of European Statisticians on the need to define the principles governing the activities of the official statistical agencies in the region and in the member States,

Adopts the present resolution:

1. Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics

that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.

2. To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

3. To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

4. The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

5. Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

6. Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

7. The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

8. Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

9. The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

10. Bilateral and multilateral co-operation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

The Conference of European Statisticians, at intervals of not more than three years, will discuss these principles, consider ways to contribute to their application and report to the Commission.

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# CHAPTER 6

# From the Planned to the Market Economy – the Role of the Conference of European Statisticians in the Transition Period[1]

## *The concept of the economy in transition and its statistical implications*

The concept of political, economic and social transition denotes the process of accelerated and comprehensive political, social and economic changes, transforming societies and economies from non-democratic political systems and centrally-planned economies, to more democratic political systems and to market-driven economies. The processes of transition are initiated, coordinated and controlled by governments of particular countries. The first stimulus and fundamental decisions of transition are of a purely political nature. The governments of formerly non-democratic countries and centrally-planned economies are made - under social and political pressure strengthened by bankruptcy of centrally-planned economic systems - to introduce institutional changes of political, social and economic systems in their countries. Those institutional political changes generate specific social and economic processes, which are commonly called "transition processes". The countries, that have followed the path of transformation of their social, economic and political system by introducing institutional changes, are called the transition countries.

The differentia specifica between transition countries and other countries, in which the processes of political, social and economic change are also taking place, are the following:

a) The origin of changes: in countries in transition the governments and politicians are those who initiate, organise and control the transition processes in politics, social life and in economies; the origin of the changes is purely political;

b) the scale of changes: in transition countries the scale of changes is "total"; the comprehensiveness and high dynamics of changes are stimulated and accelerated by administrative decisions and by the direct managerial activity of governments;

c) the direction of political changes: the direction of political and social changes in transition is progressing from non-democratic political systems of monopoly and total control of politics and social activity by one political power, to more democratic, pluralistic political systems;

[1] This chapter was written by Jozef Olenski (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

d) the direction of economic change: the direction of economic change in transition is running from so called "centrally-planned" economies of total control of economic activities by the state to market-driven economies;

e) the directions of social changes: in most transition countries social changes are the consequence of economic and political changes; in most transition countries there is no positive and active policy of social transformation of central and local governments. If there is any, it is limited - as a rule - to delayed reactions to negative social consequences of economic and political transformation (unemployment shocks, poverty, criminality, uncontrolled migration, deregulation of social services etc.);

f) the instrumentation of changes: basic instruments of implementing the changes in the economy are laws and administrative decisions of governments and governmental institutions.

In all transition countries the processes of social and economic transformation were preceded and accompanied by deep political changes. In some regions the beginning of transition was associated with the re-creation or creation of new independent states (e.g. federal states like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were divided into independent countries; some provinces of those countries have reached relatively high levels of autonomy). In one case the integration of formerly independent countries has taken place (re-unification of Germany). All countries have reached a higher level of political independence. (e.g. the countries that were members of the Warsaw Pact).

The processes of political transition are different in particular regions of Europe and Asia. In some cases it was a peaceful, politically controlled and coordinated process of integration (e.g. Germany) or disintegration (e.g. Czechoslovakia). However in some regions political transformation was and still is a difficult and painful process, not excluding the processes of political fights, social disturbances and military action (e.g. the beginning of transition in Lithuania, Moldova, and problems of North Caucasus, and in some regions of Central Asia).

***Statistical implications of transition processes***

The transformation of official statistics is an integral part of transition as a whole. The characteristic features of transition specified above (A to F) also refer to official statistics. In centrally-planned economies the mission of official statistics was to support the processes of control of the economy by the governments. Official statistical agencies of transition countries have now had to redefine missions, objectives and priorities, adjusting them to new tasks of statistics in democratic society, to the market-driven economy and to the new political situation.

In the processes of transition the official statistics and official statistical institutes may and should realize two roles :

- Active informant of society: the official statistical system (in particular national statistical institutes) initiating the observation and statistical measuring of new social and economic phenomena and processes and delivering relevant information to respective governments, businesses and social organisations;

- Passive informant: national statistical institutes adopting and adapting processes of production and dissemination of statistics to the new changing requirements of main users, at their request.

The National Statistical System (NSS) is an integral segment of the administrative infrastructure of a country in transition, which should be transformed, coherently with the transformation of other segments of the political, social and economic infrastructure of the country.

The scale, forms and methods of political transition have a decisive impact on the realization of those two roles of the NSOs, on the development of statistical information systems, on the position and realization of duties of statistics in transition. One should identify the following qualitatively different situations:

a) Transition countries, which had formal political independence in the past, before transition (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania). The adjustment of official statistics to the new social and economic situation requires deep changes of methodology and scope of statistics, but fundamental organisational changes of statistics are not necessary;

b) Transition countries created on the basis of former provinces of federal states (e.g. former republics of Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, former republics of Yugoslavia). Those newly independent states - former republic of federations - had in the past their own organisational infrastructure of official statistics. However those statistical infrastructures of "provinces" (republics) had played the role of the regional layers of the whole system of official statistics of federations. Programming of surveys, methodological and analytical work were concentrated - as a rule - at the federal level. Some areas of statistics were developed at the level of the federation only (e.g. national accounts, foreign trade, some segments of financial statistics, transport, tourism, environmental statistics etc.). In the new independent countries created on the basis of former provinces (republics) of federations the transformation of statistics covers;

- The change of the mission of the national statistical office, the status, mandate and position of statistical offices from provincial to national statistical offices. The first step of transition of statistics was the establishment of a new legal basis of official statistics, development of a new organisational structure of national statistics, creation of new technological basis and extensive re-training of statisticians in their new roles in the state, the society and national economy.
- The development and implementation of new procedures of programming of official statistical surveys statistics as the programme of national statistics. The procedure of programming and planning of surveys should be adjusted to the new organisation of

central governments and self-governments, as well as to the structures of other economic and social institutions.

- The inclusion in the programme of surveys of official statistics of new surveys relevant to the specificity of the country in transition. In the past some areas of statistics were developed on federal levels only. New independent states, new national economies need their own, "self-contained" systems of national accounts, foreign trade statistics, price statistics, unemployment statistics, statistics of public sector of economy, surveys supporting government budgeting covering the "economic space" of the country.

- The introduction of respective methodological changes, adjusting statistics to the new political situation (new national economy), to the requirements of market-driven economy and to international standards (mainly the implications of transition from MPS to SNA standards).

- Reconstruction or construction "from scratch" of basic time series covering the space (geographical and economic) of newly created independent countries. Those time series are necessary for social and economic modeling, simulation and forecasts. The time series should cover new political and economic boarders and new administrative structures of countries. The retrospection should be as deep as possible. This "statistical reconstruction" of social and economic history of newly independent countries was one of the priorities and one of the most responsible and difficult tasks of the NSOs. Particularly, the retrospective reconstruction of time series for the regional policy of new states happens to be difficult for areas covered by sampling surveys.

- The adjustment of the organisation of official statistics to the new administrative structure of the country. New independent states have introduced - as a rule - new models of regional administration and new systems of regional self-government. Because of that, the NSOs have had to adjust their regional structures.

- Technological re-engineering of statistical system, implementation of modern IT.

c) Transition by incorporation - the case of the unification of Germany. It is the only case of the transition of statistical system by incorporation - the replacement of the "old" statistical system of GDR by the statistical system of the Federal Republic of Germany in all its aspects: organisation, programme of surveys, methodology and technology. Experiences of the transformation of official statistics of the former GDR are very specific and can hardly be used as the pattern or model strategy for other regions.

Case b) - countries created on the basis of former provinces of federal states - is the most common situation of transition in the ECE region. What is specific to case b) is that newly independent states had to develop their new political, administrative, economic and information infrastructures - including statistics - not exactly "from scratch", but on the basis of fragments of

formerly existing "supranational" infrastructure of federal states. This basis may facilitate the transition of statistics, especially in the countries, which inherited former federal statistical offices (e.g. Czech Republic). However, on the other hand, old structures and the relative underdevelopment of methodological capacity in statistical offices of new states (formerly playing to some extent the role of regional statistical offices), which were formerly the "provinces" (republics) of federations, makes the transition of statistics in those countries more difficult.

Institutional processes of transition in newly independent states are qualitatively different than in the other countries in transition. Moreover, each country has its own national, political and economic specificity. The understanding of this specificity is important for the transition strategy of official statistics. However, despite the obvious fact that each country in transition has its own political, social and economic specificity, there is observed the propensity to perceive the countries in transition as a set of homogenous socio-economic systems, which may be described by one standard set of statistical indicators. This approach is to a large extent adaptable for economic statistics, but it does not seem to be applicable for social statistics.

Therefore statistical standards recommended for countries in transition should be adjusted to the specific national conditions of the particular country in transition. In defining statistical standards for transition countries, the regional and national specificity of each country and of each region should be taken into account. Historical conditions, the actual political and social situation and its changes should not be underrated.

There is also the qualitative difference between the conditions and strategy of development of statistical systems in the countries which have applied for accession to the European Union, and the countries in transition which are not candidates to the European Union. In the countries that are candidates to the EU the strategic priority is the adjustment of national statistical systems to the statistical standards of the EU. Their perspective and objective is the integration of national statistical systems as an integral part of the "European Statistical System" (ESS). National statistical offices of the candidate countries are focused on the compatibility of national statistics with the European Statistical System (ESS). The objective of the transition of the statistics of EU candidates is integration with the ESS in the perspective of membership in the EU (for some countries 2004-2005). In transforming official statistical systems, the EU candidates are concentrating on the implementation of the requirements of the European Union, particularly those concerned with the work of EUROSTAT.

The process of transition of official statistics in the countries, which are candidates to the EU, is an integral part of the whole process of integration of those countries, their national economies with the EU. The pressure on the coherence of the national statistical systems of the accession countries to the ESS is so strong that it seems that specific national statistical needs are underrated and even not taken into account .

On the other hand, the objectives and the strategies of transformation of official statistics in the countries of the ECE region that are not candidates to the European Union are concentrated on:

- internal processes of economic and social transition, taking into account national specificity of transition processes;

- information requirements of international organisations supporting the processes of transition in those countries ( e.g. IMF, World Bank, UNDP).

The non-candidate countries are not obliged to adjust the organisation and functioning of their national statistical systems to international standards by implementing those standards at the national level. The requirements of international organisations cooperating with those countries refer to the scope and methodology of statistical output data delivered to international organisations. The strategy, methods and scale of the adjustment of official statistics to international standards is the autonomous, internal decision of national statistical offices.

The national strategy of the development of national statistical systems in transition countries, which are not candidates to the EU, is oriented towards three main objectives:

- The development of the national statistical system as an integral segment of the information infrastructure of the national economy;

- Production of relevant statistics for supporting decisions of governments, monitoring and evaluating the results of country-specific transition processes and social and economic consequences of transition;

- Adjustment of the national official statistical system to international standards, in particular those recommended by the UN.

The objectives specified above may not necessarily be coherent. For example, statistical monitoring of transition processes may require data which are different from those required by international organisations for their analyses and international comparisons. International statistical standards may not correspond with the needs of presenting and analyzing country-specific phenomena and processes, etc. The implementation of international statistical standards by the non-candidate countries to the EU is the nationally embedded decision of the NSOs, rather than the mandatory consequence of international agreements and treaties of governments.

In practice, in the countries that are not candidates to the European Union, the priority (in the transformation and development of official statistics) may and should be given to the internal needs of governments, businesses and societies. The main task of official statistics in those countries is to help the governments to define optimal strategies of transition, to evaluate economic and social costs and effects of transition, to build early warning systems and the monitoring of transition processes. Recommendations and standards developed and proposed by international organisations should take this hierarchy of priorities into account.

Analyzing the practices in transition countries, it seems that the function of official statistics as an indispensable tool of economic and social policy in the processes of transition seems to be underrated by governments. Politicians, managers, experts and lawyers involved in implementing and monitoring economic and social reforms do not precede their decisions by developing proper statistical surveys and statistical monitoring systems. International statistical organisations, particularly UN statistical services and the CES, are helping the statisticians in transition countries to convince their governments, that the proper transformation and development of official statistics is a prerequisite of the successful transition of national economies.

***General problems of transformation of statistics in transition countries***

At the very beginning of political and economic transition there was a noticeable syndrome, which may be called "transition shock". The statisticians of transition countries suddenly discovered that statistical methods and surveys used by them for years did not fit the new social and economic reality. They started to look at the methods and approaches of countries and economies, which have similar social and economic experience. The approach commonly adopted was the "transplantation" of methods used in developed market-driven economies. In some areas of statistics the results of that approach were very positive. However quite soon it became evident that some social and economic phenomena and processes in the economies in transition are of a specific nature and that they cannot be measured and described using statistical standards and methods devised for market-driven economies. In the ECE region, under the auspices of the CES, the ECE Statistics Division, EUROSTAT, and on a global scale the IMF, OECD and World Bank, UNDP and statistical services of other international organisations have developed statistical standards of economic statistics specifically for transition countries.

Now, after a decade has passed, all former centrally-planned economies are still in transition. In their more or less market-driven economies some economic and social processes are of a specific nature and require specific statistical measurement. In all transition countries the processes of adjustment of official economic statistics to the needs of market-driven economies and international standards are advanced, but not finished. In some countries this process seems to be coming to the end. Their national statistical agencies produce and disseminate economic statistics following basic international standards and methodological recommendations.

However, up to now, much less attention has been paid to specific transition-oriented statistical standards for social phenomena and processes. There is a gap between the statistical coverage of economic transition and the statistical coverage of social processes in transition countries. This gap and its negative consequences for the information supplied to policy makers in transition countries is better seen and better understood in advanced phases of transition, where "old" centrally-planned economies are already replaced by market driven-economies, but the social institutions and structures have not adjusted to the new economic situation.

For each transition country there may, and should be, determined a minimum set of statistical data, which are indispensable for governments, businesses and for households to take

proper decisions and rationalize their behaviour in different phases and situations of the transition period. This minimum set of statistical data may be different for (a) a particular country, for (b) each phase of transition and for (c) each area of social and economic life. Official statistical agencies should identify precisely this country - specific statistical minimum. The governments of transition countries should be aware and convinced, that the consequence of defining the statistical minimum for the country is the minimum of resources for official statistics in the government budget, which should enable the national statistical offices to produce, compile and deliver to the users all necessary data. International organisations and developed countries offering assistance to national statistics in transition countries should pay more attention and give higher priority to the country specific statistical minimum.

A minimum set of social statistical indicators for transition countries does not mean a small set of data. On the contrary, it is a rather long list of statistical indicators. It is a large heterogeneous set of information covering all areas of social statistics, precisely pertinent to the needs of different classes of users: governments, non-government organisations (NGOs), businesses and the public. The capturing, production, compilation and dissemination of a "data minimum" may not be easy for national statistical services. Official statistical agencies in all transition countries are expected to supply relevant and timely social statistical indicators, interpretable for specific conditions of a particular country. They should meet the following needs and requirements:

- analysis and evaluation of the current economic and social situation of the country in transition, by measuring specific social phenomena and processes;

- identification and description of the social impacts and consequences of economic reforms in transition countries;

- impartial simulation of the economic and social consequences of the decisions of governments, introducing new economic mechanisms transforming the centrally-planned economy into a market-driven economy;

- short and medium-term forecasting of economic and social processes;

- statistical monitoring of economic and social phenomena and processes on the level of the national economy, regions, branches and social groups;

- evaluation of the efficacy of strategies and tools used by the governments of transition countries to implement new economic and social regulations;
- evaluation and estimation of the social and economic costs of transition;

- development (if possible) of statistical early warning systems for the governments;

- statistical description of transformation of economic interrelations between countries, that had been one national economy;

- compilation of comparable statistical data for international comparisons and "benchmarking" of the social (and human) development of countries in transition.

In newly independent states the national statistical agencies are also expected to produce retrospective time series covering both the pre-independence periods for the territory of the country and the period of political independence, as long as possible and necessary for modeling, forecasting and simulation.

The statisticians from transition countries have had to transform their statistical systems in very short period of time to meet the basic information requirements of their governments. It was not only transformation of statistics from the central-planning model to statistics adjusted to the needs of a market-driven economy, but also the implementation of the statistical observation of specific transition processes.

***The "transition shock" and the CES***

The Conference of European Statisticians in all its 50 years of life has been the forum for the cooperation of statisticians from different economies and political systems. Political differences and tensions were no obstacle to friendly collaboration, exchange of ideas and experiences of statisticians from all countries. This collaboration was based on understanding, that different economies need different statistical standards and methods, that "different" does not mean "better" or "worse". This understanding happened to be priceless in establishing the partnership and cooperation between statisticians from developed market driven economies and from transition countries.

The Conference of European Statisticians has experienced specific "transition shocks" itself. From the beginning of the 1990s the number of members of the CES has almost doubled (from 34 to 55). After the partition of the federal states of Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, the CES has welcomed new members representing newly created independent states. "Old" members of the CES have welcomed new colleagues as "old friends", as partners in the effort to develop European and global statistics. New colleagues were immediately included in the international statistical family of the European region. No wonder. We knew many "newcomers" as brilliant, experienced statisticians in different domains of statistical theory, in the practice of official statistics and in statistical information technologies.

New members of the CES, representing transition countries, have been immediately invited to become active participants in all activities of the Conference of European Statisticians, and in the structures of the CES, the Bureau of the Conference.

Both new members of the CES from transition countries and "old" members representing former centrally-planned economies that have begun the process of transition, have brought to the international statistical community new problems to be solved by statistics, new ideas for solving them, new areas for scientific and professional discussion. It was the stimulus for new initiatives and research projects.

Statisticians representing transition countries were facing specific tasks. They included the implementation in a very short period of time new surveys and methods for statistical monitoring of new phenomena in their countries and for information support of governments (which were taking fundamental economic and social decisions, decisive for the costs of transition and for future developments of countries and nations). Statisticians from transition countries expected to find good patterns and relevant experiences in the statistical practices of developed market economies and international organisation. And they were right. Statisticians from developed market economies turned out to be not only good friends, but also good teachers. They shared all their experiences, "dos and don'ts", in the atmosphere of partnership, mutual understanding and enthusiasm. National statistical agencies and international statistical institutions devoted resources and the time of their best experts to help statisticians from transition countries to adjust their statistical systems to international standards and to the specific needs of economies in transition.

***Docendo discimus***

The Conference of European Statisticians was and is the largest forum of initiation and co-ordination of transfer between statisticians from developed market - driven economies and transition economies. The transfer of methodological knowledge, standards and statistical know-how was based not on the "teacher-pupil" relations, but on the "docendo discimus" principle. After over 10 years of exchange of knowledge between statisticians from developed market driven economies and their colleagues from economies in transition we clearly see that the benefit was mutual. The longer we collaborate, the more we learn mutually.

The Conference of European Statisticians is the forum of developing the strategy of the assistance of international statistical organisations and services of the European region: EUROSTAT, OECD, statistical services of specialized UN organisations, and national statistical offices of many countries of Europe, Canada and US. The objective of this strategy was to coordinate actions, to optimize resources and to assure comprehensive assistance. It covers all layers of the transformation of official statistical systems:

- Implementation of fundamental principles of official statistics;
- Statistical law;
- Position of national official statistical agencies in governmental structures of countries;
- Role of statistical offices in the development of the new information infrastructure of the countries in transition, especially in reconstructing information systems supporting

government activities (taxes, social security, social assistance, labour market, foreign trade and customs etc.);

- Implementing international standards, especially those that are different from the MPS-based standards and classifications;

- Replacement of the MPS system by the SNA system and the respective changes to all related surveys;

- Implementation of new statistical methods and surveys for phenomena and processes, which were negligible for statistics in centrally-planned economies or were observed via administrative information systems, but which are of utmost importance for statistics in the economies in transition (e.g. unemployment and labour market monitoring, government budgets, migration, shadow economy, trans-boarder trade, etc.);

- Implementing of statistical methods adjusted to the new situation created by the market-driven economy (e.g. sample surveys in economic statistics, quality control of data, non-response, using alternative sources of information etc.);

- Implementation of new information technologies.

The approach to assisting statisticians of transition countries by statisticians from developed market economies and international organisation is harmonized and orchestrated. The assistance is addressed and adjusted to all layers of national statistical offices and covers all aspects of their activity:

- Seminars and workshops for top management of national statistical agencies;
- Training courses in statistical methodology;
- Training and workshops on statistics for particular subject-matter areas;
- Methods and tools of management of surveys;
- Training in the implementation and use of modern IT;
- Establishing relations between official statistics and government administration.

There is space in this chapter to specify the numerous actions that were undertaken under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians from the very beginning of the processes of transition. They were initiated and realized as a result of constructive dialogue between statisticians of transition countries and statisticians from developed market economies and international organisations. This feedback and dialogue was helpful in adjusting the forms and areas of assistance to the real needs of transition countries.

After the involvement of some Central European countries in transition with the European Union, EUROSTAT initiated coordinated actions of assistance and cooperation within the

programme of assistance of the European Union to CEE countries (PHARE, TACIS). Also, when some central and eastern European (CEE) countries became members of the OECD, they were included to the programmes of cooperation of the OECD in the field of statistics.

The consequence of the association of some countries with the European Union was the change of priorities of transformation of statistics in those countries - the adjustment of the statistical systems of those countries to the requirements of the EU.

Thanks to the spirit of friendship and cooperation of the CES, the international organisations and statistical offices of developed market economies with unbelievable energy and frankness offered assistance to colleagues from transition countries. They devoted the time and knowledge of their best experts, many of them known as leading protagonists and highest authorities in the various domains of statistics. Not to mention the financing of activities, mainly from the budgets of the donor countries and international organisation. The importance of this "face to face" contact of statisticians from transition countries with top-level experts in the world can hardly be overrated for the efficiency and effectiveness of the absorption of new methods, ideas and approaches by statisticians from transition countries.

The forms of knowledge transfer have been perfectly adjusted to specific needs. Of particular note has been the special value of study visits of statisticians from transition countries to statistical offices of developed market economies. Important stimuli for transition are numerous specific problem-oriented workshops. In such workshops statisticians from transition countries and their colleagues from developed economies discuss, in the friendly atmosphere of partnership, most recent problems of statistics and they have developed joint solutions.

Now, after a decade of transition, this process of collaboration and learning according to the principle docendo discimus, is growing and accelerating all the time.

***"Nobody is perfect"***

The transition from a centrally-planned to a market-driven economy is a process without precedence in history. The expectations concerning social and economic costs and time of transformation processes happened to be optimistic. After a decade of transition we see more clearly see that it will take a long time. The transition process is lasting much longer and is much more complicated then expected.

Today official statisticians from both transition countries and developed market economies see better that the economies in transition are "specific" social and economic systems. They need specific statistical methods and data for monitoring, describing and analyzing social and economic processes of different phases and layers of transition. Statistical methodologists should take this into account when developing statistical standards.

Newly independent states created as a result of political transition are special "case studies". Numerous countries had to create their national statistical services almost from scratch. They also had to reconstruct the "statistical history" of new states, societies and economies. It seems that priority in assistance should be given to those countries and their young national statistical offices.

The main aim of the training and the transfer of knowledge and know-how was teaching statisticians from transition countries the standards, methods and organisation of statistics in stabilized, developed market economy countries. Statisticians of transition countries, experienced in "driving the automobile of official statistics on fixed highways of centrally-planned economy", were taught how "to sail the boat of statistics in the heavy seas of open developed market driven economy". Referring to that comparison, the statistics for the economy in transition rather requires knowledge of "how to built an amphibian" adjusted both to highways, to pathless tracks and to heavy seas. The statisticians of the transition countries should be taught not only "how to sail", but first of all "how to reconstruct the car to an amphibian" while all the time driving safely. The problems and methods of re-engineering of statistical systems in all its layers (indicators, methods, organisation, technology, law) adjusting them to the specificity of economy in transition, should be taken into account in optimizing the programmes of assistance and collaboration.

In the first phases of transition, stress was placed on the implementation of international standards in economic statistics. While the development of respective methods for monitoring social processes was of lower priority. Now more attention should be put on statistical methods and standards for social phenomena specific for transition.

The exchanges of the experiences between statisticians of transition countries, which are more advanced or experienced in transition, are of special value for colleagues from other countries in transition.

All transition countries are reconstructing their information infrastructure. They re-develop, or they build from scratch, new administrative information systems (registers, tax systems, social insurance systems etc.). It is an exceptional opportunity to create an information infrastructure useful as the "source" of statistics. National statistical agencies of transition countries should not hesitate and should not be afraid to play an active role in shaping the new information infrastructure of the state and the economy.

Implementing the fundamental principles of statistical ethics in practice is the prerequisite of the international integrity of statistics. In centrally-planned economies official statisticians were "fine little helpers" of central planning administration delivering data to them. In economies in transition, as in developed market economies, the official statisticians play a more active role in informing governments and societies. It is their social mission. The UN Fundamental principles of official statistics and the ISI code of statistical ethics show how this mission should be realized in practice. Teaching those principles should be an integral part of the transition of statistics, transforming ways of thinking on statistics by statisticians themselves.

### *European statistics after transition - new mission of the Conference of European Statisticians for XXI century*

The "Transition" has created a new strategic situation in European and global statistics. The former division of Europe into "West" and "East" is not valid any more. The former role of the CES as the bridge integrating statistics from "West" and "East" should be re-defined. It seems that there is a need for discussion on the new mission of the Conference of European Statisticians.

Here are some problems of special importance for transition countries, for which the CES seems to be predestined as the forum for discussion and finding solutions:

- Official statistics as the information system for the current monitoring of economic and social phenomena and processes (extremely important for transition economies),
- Statistical standards and methods for the age of globalization (redefining the statistical concept of the "national economy"),
- The concepts and roles of national statistics in global, knowledge-based "new economy" (new indicators of development)
- Statistical consequences of regional "single markets" (EU, CIS, NAFTA, etc.),
- Implications of the European Statistical System of the EU for the statistics of the UN European region (supranational statistics),
- Global information systems and national statistics (in finance, information sector, research and development, etc.).

The answer to these problems, and many others, shall help and facilitate the transformation of statistics in transition countries.

The mission of the CES as the forum for the integration of official statisticians of the UN European Region in the coming phases of transition of the multi-continental UN European region is of utmost importance for the development of statistics in the world. From the perspective of 50 years it is very clearly visible how important and indispensable is the role of the Conference of European Statisticians in the new political and economic landscape of the UN European region and of the world. The identification and specification of objectives and tools seems to be needed for all: statisticians, developed economies, transition countries, international organisations and for the whole statistical community of the world of today.

## CHAPTER 7

# The CES and the Development of Statistics in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Transition Period[1]

### *Active position of the CES*

The political and economic changes which occurred at the beginning of the '90s in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe played a considerable role in the activities of the Conference of European Statisticians. It was one of the first subsidiary bodies of the UN ECE which restructured its programme of work. As early as February 1990 a consultative meeting of the heads of European statistical services was conducted on the future role of the CES. The directions of further work of the Conference under new conditions of regional cooperation were determined at that meeting. Special consideration was given to cooperation projects aimed at rendering assistance to the statistical services of the countries in transition in the improvement of their statistical methods for work in market economy conditions.

One of the decisions of the Second Session of the Special Working Group on the Activities of UN ECE (13.12.1990) drew the attention of the Conference to the necessity of continuing the implementation of previous initiatives on coordinating its programme of work with the requirements of transition countries. In particular, attention was given to problems which can be solved most efficiently within the framework of multilateral cooperation.

Starting with the 39th session, the agenda of the CES began to include a question on the adaptation of statistical services to the process of transition and integration in Europe. To that end, a programme of transition projects was prepared. As mentioned at the 41st session of the CES, the Conference reacted rapidly to the changes in Central and Eastern Europe and started paying much attention in its work to the problems of restructuring statistical activities in the transition countries, in particular, in the CIS countries. Some activities of the CES, especially working sessions, were entirely devoted to these problems. Later on, the document "An Integrated Presentation of the Programmes of International Statistical Work in the ECE Region" began to include a separate programme activity element concerning the transition countries. The aim of that element was to render assistance to them in the introduction of the methods of work similar to those applied in the countries with a developed market economy. The Integrated Presentation, without doubt, is an efficient tool for the coordination of all international statistical activities in the ECE region. It is very well structured to cover all aspects of statistical work. Further, its various elements help to

[1] This chapter was written by Vladimir Sokolin (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

solve many problems faced by statisticians in the CIS countries in the field of international cooperation.

Heads of the national statistical services of the CIS countries, participating in the work of the CES plenary sessions, have the opportunity not only to be aware of the present-day problems of the European and world statistics, but also to participate actively in the discussion of problems characteristic of the transition countries as well. This is facilitated by the attention which is paid to such problems in preparing the agenda for the plenary session. Over the last few years the following issues were discussed which were very important for statistics in the CIS: quality of statistical data, agricultural statistics, CPI, non-observed economy and labour statistics. Indeed the whole set of questions, which are of interest for transition countries, was included in the priority list for future plenary sessions.

At the same time I should mention the fact that participation in the discussion of the most difficult problems of the contemporary statistics is very interesting for the CIS countries as well. It is of great importance even concerning those fields which are absolutely new for these countries at present from the point of view of statistical observation. Participation of CIS representatives in general discussions helps them to acquire the advanced experience of the EU countries and to prepare for the efficient solution of future problems.

In addition, the participation of CIS statisticians in the most important international undertakings under the auspices of the CES with the support of the interested international organisations stimulates the development of specific statistical fields, and the recommendations agreed at these meetings are widely used in the CIS. Working meetings on national accounts, CPI, and transport statistics for example, promote statistical development in the CIS countries. Recently, CIS representatives have started participating more actively in working meetings by delivering reports and making presentations.

### *Establishment of the CIS Statistical Committee and its activities*

The 12 new states – former Republics of the Soviet Union - which created the Commonwealth of Independent States ten years ago, started participating in the sessions of the Conference from the beginning of the '90s.

One of the first acts of the Heads of Governments of the states of this Commonwealth was the decision to establish a statistical committee "coordinating the activities of the statistical services of the Commonwealth of Independent States". On February 6, 1992 an Agreement was adopted concerning a statistical service for the Commonwealth of Independent States, in accordance with which the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States was established and renamed later on as the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Such an organisation was necessary for several reasons. The statistical services of the new states faced a number of serious problems at the beginning. They were formed on the basis of the statistical bodies of the republics. Those bodies had territorially organised offices and qualified personnel, specializing in the collection of primary accounting data, which they aggregated by territories and industries and presented as aggregates to the different levels of local management authorities and to the Goskomstat of the USSR. One of the most important tasks of statistics at that time was to ensure control of the implementation of plans. Practically all scientific and methodological work was carried out centrally at the office of the Goskomstat of the USSR and its institutions. The national statistical services of the new states did not have experience in this kind of work.

Each of these newly created national statistical services faced the problem of not only completely building up the statistics of an independent state on their own, but also of mastering statistical methods and meeting the requirements of a market economy and international statistical norms and standards. This had to be done in isolation from international statistical practice because all external activities in this field had been carried out in the central body (Goskomstat) as well.

The first priority was both the adoption of unified methodology, ensuring comparability of statistical data, and the organisation of inter-state exchange of statistical information for leading bodies of the countries.

Cooperation between the national statistical services and the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth enabled a rapid solution of these problems.

The higher statistical body of the Commonwealth – the Council of the Heads of Statistical Services of the Countries - plays an important role in the organisation of cooperation in statistics. It discusses the most important questions of statistics development in the Commonwealth, adopts decisions on the main directions of cooperation in this field and approves the work programmes of the CIS statistical committee and the reports of its activity.

The Council has established a minimum list of statistical indicators for uniform presentation to the statistical committee, has devised a unified methodology for their calculation, and has adopted corresponding normative acts establishing the volume, order and conditions of information exchange. Inter-state exchange of statistical information in the Commonwealth was built up on this basis.

During the ten years of its operations the CIS statistical committee has prepared more than 450 methodological documents in the most important fields of statistics, many of which concern reforms connected with transition to international standards. To ensure a corresponding scientific basis for the methodological materials under development, they are discussed by the Scientific Council composed of leading specialists from the national statistical services, other ministries and agencies, and scientists of a number of scientific and educational institutions.

Much consideration in the methodology was given to such urgent work as the system of national accounts (SNA), international comparisons of main value indicators, estimation of purchasing power parities, financial and price statistics, harmonization of national classifications with international standards, census of population, statistics of employment and unemployment, statistics of external economic activities, small business and others.

The CIS countries have carried out a great deal of work on the implementation of SNA-93. Many countries of the Commonwealth compile input-output tables on a regular basis in accordance with the SNA concepts in a short time and a number of countries have an extended programme. Most countries compile balances of fixed assets and develop indicators of national wealth. Classifications of all kinds of economic activities and products, on the basis of model classifications developed by the CIS statistical committee, are in use in all of the states.

More than 90 methodological seminars and meetings have been conducted, with the participation of more than three thousand specialists of the CIS national statistical services. Most of the seminars were conducted jointly with leading international organisations, or with national statistical services of the European region within the framework of the TACIS programme.

A recommended legislative act “On State Statistics”, was prepared by the CIS statistical committee. It was discussed at the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS and recommended by this Assembly to the parliaments of the Commonwealth countries to be used as a basis for the development of national laws.

A statistical data base, with user access twenty four hours a day, has been created for the purposes of data exchange.

On the basis of the information available, the CIS Statcommittee prepared about 700 reports, "outlooks" and other analytic materials on the state of the economy of the countries, and regularly informed their leaders, economic agencies, interstate bodies about the socio-economic processes taking place. The CIS Statcommittee has issued hundreds of statistical and information bulletins, press-releases for mass media, about 100 statistical abstracts and yearbooks, statistical reference-books. It also issues CD-ROMs and has maintained a web-site on the Internet since 1996. Among the constant users of statistical information are higher management bodies of all the states of the Commonwealth, interstate and intergovernmental bodies, and scientific-research organisations of the Commonwealth. The CIS statistical committee exchanges information with the statistical units of many international organisations, and disseminates statistical information on the Commonwealth abroad. It is an official observer in a number of international bodies. Its participation in their work and cooperation with statistical bodies of international organisations has assisted in the transition of the CIS countries to international standards and recommendations.

***Role of the TACIS programme in the development of statistics in the CIS countries***

The TACIS programme has played an important role in the restructuring of statistics in the CIS countries during the last decade

The programme has covered a wide range of subjects: reforming the system of government administration; restructuring of public enterprises and development of private sector; finances and banking sector; development of transport and communication infrastructure; energy sector; creation of efficient production system, etc. But statistics were not forgotten. In the total TACIS budget its share is rather low, only 0.2%. However, statistical projects play a special role in the creation of a new information infrastructure and promoting the efficient exchange of data.

The history of TACIS statistical programme has gone through several stages. The periods mentioned below should not be considered as strictly defined but rather some broadly defined stages in the evolution of the programme

The initial stage of TACIS cooperation in the sphere of statistics took place in 1992-1994 and was based on common interstate priorities. It included stand-alone training (the first stage of the implementation of "Statistics-1" programme). The EU and the CIS countries were getting acquainted with each others' experience. At the same time common approaches to the organisation of statistics were being adopted. Statistical programmes implemented at this stage were an important part of the overall EU programme of assisting CIS countries in transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. In general, the first consultations were aimed at the transfer of 'know-how' in the priority fields of statistics. They became an important stage in developing close cooperation with the national statistical services of the European Union countries. Specialists from the CIS countries got opportunities to communicate with their European colleagues, to deal with urgent statistical problems in more detail, and to learn from the experience of the European Union.

After the signing of the Agreements on partnership and cooperation between the majority of the CIS countries, TACIS became a more target-oriented programme. These agreements provided new opportunities for the CIS countries to be integrated into the world economic system. They covered a whole range of cooperation possibilities between the EU and the CIS in the political, trade, and economic spheres. Certain articles of these agreements dealt with cooperation in the field of statistics. So, the second stage of TACIS statistical programme implementation was devoted to reaching the objectives set in the bilateral documents and cooperation was focused on the national priorities and they covered a wide range of statistical subjects.

An important stage in extending cooperation in the framework of TACIS was the implementation of a series of projects on the adaptation of state statistical systems in the CIS countries to new economic conditions. It was closely related to the start of the process to ensure the comparability of the statistical methodologies of the CIS countries with international standards.

Some projects were devoted to specific methodological issues targeting the most urgent problems of the national statistical systems, such as the organisation of sample surveys, statistical observation of prices, registers of enterprises, business statistics, etc. At this stage, cooperation was developed in the form of providing consulting assistance, transfer of 'know-how', and implementation of pilot projects.

Starting from 1998, one of the main requirements of national TACIS programmes is a comprehensive conceptual approach to their development ("Statistics-3" and Statistics-4" programmes). Separate projects are being replaced by unified programmes, where subprojects are interrelated and subordinate to a common priority task. As a result, the programme implementation period was clearly determined (three years), which allowed the national statistical services to carry out project work in stages with intermediate objectives.

National programmes corresponding to this stage of TACIS development were targeted at establishing statistical infrastructure (classifications, register of enterprises, regional statistics, dissemination of statistical data) and developing certain important fields of statistics (statistics of industry, national accounts, trade statistics). A characteristic feature of this stage was the wide use of pilot surveys in the programme implementation, which were targeted at testing the techniques developed by national statisticians together with EU experts and adapted to the economic peculiarities of the regions. Such an approach allowed a significant increase in the efficiency of cooperation, when implementation of methods, software products, and statistical forms has become an inseparable part of the programme.

At the present stage of cooperation, in 2000-2002, (programmes "Statistics-4" and "Statistics-5"), coordination and harmonization are the main priorities. In view of the comprehensive approach to programme development, much attention is paid to linking new components of technical assistance to the long-term integrated statistical programmes in the countries, to coordination of international programmes of assistance to the CIS countries and certain cooperation programmes. Consequently, at this stage, the TACIS programme has become a tool for leading European experts to test the national methodologies in the key statistical areas. Approved methodologies have become the basis for conducting wider and more costly programmes either in the framework of national budget financing or with the help of international donors.

The main objective of the programme at the beginning of the new millennium has become the harmonization of methodological approaches to calculating statistical indicators according to the standards and methodologies used by international organisations, and producing statistical data consistent with the generally practiced methodology. This priority was predetermined by further integration of the CIS countries into the world economic system and by the necessity to improve the exchange of data among national statistical services and international organisations.

Another important feature of the recent stages of the programme implementation is the opportunity for the specialists from the CIS countries to take an active part in international statistical activities in Europe. Financial support within the framework of the programme has

allowed them to participate in the most important seminars conducted under the auspices of the UNECE and Eurostat.

Speaking of the efficiency of the TACIS statistical programme, which has been under way for 10 years now, we should mention, above all, the timeliness of technical assistance. Efforts to ensure a flexible policy in determining the programme priorities, timely changes in its strategy and practical approaches again and again breathed new life into the sensitive process of multilateral relations. During the past decade, about 30 national statistical services have participated in the programme implementation ensuring good results. There have been more than two hundred projects, dozens of pilot surveys, and targeted supplies of equipment and software. All of this, to a great extent, has ensured the development of statistics in CIS countries and has promoted the progress of their statistical methodology to European standards.

At present, we can say that the TACIS programme in statistics has been successful and deserves to be developed. But we also should admit that for some CIS countries the TACIS programme is over in its present form and new forms have to be developed.

The recent years of TACIS programme implementation have demonstrated that the focus has shifted towards carrying out joint work by the specialists of the national statistical services of the CIS and their colleagues from the EU. Consulting services and transfer of knowledge and experience which were the main aspects of the TACIS programme in the first years of its implementation, have begun to be replaced in the early 2000s by a mutually beneficial dialogue. This tendency which could be briefly described as a shift from “technical assistance” to “cooperation” has already become and will remain the main feature of the TACIS programme development in future.

### *Cooperation with other international organisations*

Cooperation with the EU within the framework of the TACIS programme is very important for the development of statistics in the CIS countries. However, it should be emphasized that for the development of the statistical potential of these countries it is also very important to interact with the statistical services of other leading international organisations: UNECE, OECD, IMF, World Bank, ILO, etc. As an example we can recall one of the most fundamental pieces of work carried out in the last decade and related to implementation of a totally new methodology in macroeconomic statistics; that is implementation of the system of national accounts.

Substantial efforts to promote the implementation of the international standards of the SNA into the statistical practices of the CIS statistical services were made by OECD whose experts were the first to take an active part in solving this global problem starting from the end of 1980's. Their experience, and their considerate and professional approach, contributed to the successful start of this work. Later on, representatives of the Statistics Directorate of the OECD organised methodological seminars in many CIS countries and participated in experimental calculations.

Representatives of the World Bank have also provided a very important contribution to the implementation of SNA methodology in the CIS countries. The reports prepared in the mid 1990s, containing the analysis of the implementation process and recommendations for its improvement, played a very important role in efficient continuation of this work. In several countries these recommendations were of a revolutionary character, and their publication greatly assisted national statistical services in fulfilling this important task. It was rather important that the World Bank invited national experts to prepare reports. It was one of the ways to transfer international experience

Cooperation with the IMF Statistics Department was also very important for SNA implementation. Consultation and methodological seminars provided by its experts were very supportive to the work of the statisticians in the CIS countries.

Consultations and meetings organised by the UNECE were also very important. Participation in these meetings provided CIS statisticians with a unique opportunity not to focus on their urgent problems only, but to see the whole range of issues related to the development of national accounts. It is of invaluable assistance because it helps us to see the future more clearly and, hopefully, to choose the optimal path.

We could give many examples from other fields of statistics, such as the contribution of ILO experts to the development of labour statistics, price statistics, etc. All these examples are evidence of efficient cooperation with many international organisations with the purpose of solving the main strategic problems of the last decade. This has involved a transition from the methodology accompanying the centralized economy to the methodology of data collection and processing consistent with the market economy.

All the efforts described above have enabled the creation and development of the interstate statistical system of the Commonwealth, although not everything took place in favorable conditions. Many national statistical services face serious financial difficulties constantly and for that reason they lag behind in technical equipment and other supplies. Sometimes it leads to a situation where national statistical services are forced to give up a number of important statistical tasks.

However we can say that the initial stage of reforming statistics in the CIS countries has been completed. During this stage national statistical services have obtained experience in solving first priority tasks on the improvement of statistical methodology of calculation and analysis of economic and social indicators. Now we should specify our priorities regarding the development of statistics for the near future.

The solution of the problems faced by statisticians of the CIS countries will be aided undoubtedly by further discussion of the problems of transition countries statistical systems at the Conference of European Statisticians.

The Conference of European Statisticians retains its leading role as “the coordinator of coordinators" in the field of international statistical cooperation. Along with that it has one more very important significance for statistical services of the CIS countries: it provides a unique opportunity for their leaders to participate in general discussion of the most important problems of the modern development of statistics. In the very difficult situation in which CIS countries statisticians have to work, such discussion helps them to plan efficient strategies for further development

Undoubtedly, the Conference of European Statisticians will maintain its great significance in assisting statistical development, including statistical development in the CIS countries.

# CHAPTER 8

# Official Statistics Reshaped - the New Role of International and Supranational Organisations[1]

## *The players and the policy needs*

The Paris-based Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was set up in 1948. When it was superseded by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1961, it already had flourishing statistics operations within a number of departments, of which the major one was the Economics and Statistics Department. The need for statistics was determined by the requirement for input into the OECD's quantitative analyses as a basis for its policy recommendations. It was active in a number of areas: notably it had acknowledged expertise in national accounts, taxation, research and development and migration.

In 1991 OECD issued a strategy paper arguing that the interests of both the OECD's analysts and outside consumers might be better served if the statistical service were to be split from the analytical serviced. As a result, the Statistical Division was created in 1992, headed by a Chief Statistician.

In 1953, some three hundred and fifty kilometres to the east, the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, which consisted of six countries, was being set up in Luxembourg. There was a fledgling statistical service consisting of twelve officials.

In 1958, the European Economic Community was founded and Eurostat (more formally the Statistical Office of the European Communities) became the Statistics Directorate of the European Commission, turning its attention to agriculture, external trade, energy, social policy, macro-economics and technical co-operation with developing countries. During these early years it concentrated mainly on harmonisation aspects. In the late sixties and early seventies the first common standards, such as the Nimexe trade classification and the European System of National and Regional Accounts were developed.

The mid seventies to mid eighties saw an expansion of the Community to 12 countries and the first Community-wide surveys. The Single Market, which came into effect at the end of 1992 had a far-reaching effect on statistics in that it dismantled customs barriers, thus paving the way for the Intrastat system which would collect statistics on intra-Community trade from businesses instead of from customs.

[1] This chapter was written by James Whitworth (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

At about this time, the European Economic Area (EEA) was created, incorporating six of the seven European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. This had the effect of enlarging the "European Statistical System" (ESS) to 18 countries.

The Treaty on European Union which was drafted at the same time foresaw the Common Currency and with it, the definition of the criteria for membership which required an extensive effort of harmonisation of statistics (i.e. government debt and deficit, inflation rates). This, and more, information would be needed to monitor the economies of the Member States in the Growth and Stability Pact.

The United Nations Family also spawned a number of statistical services within its agencies and programmes. The New York based UN secretariat set up a service to ensure co-ordination, the United Nations Statistical Office, (UNSO or UNSTAT), later known as the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The statistics division is part of a UN HQ department, currently the Department for Economic and Social Affairs. UNSD's role is to the oversee the collection, processing and dissemination of statistical information, the standardisation of statistical methods, classifications and definitions, the technical co-operation programme, and the co-ordination of international statistical programmes and activities.

In addition to the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the other Regional Commissions also set up statistical divisions: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The ECE was created soon after the creation of the UN itself, but some other regional commissions were created much later.

Nearly all of the UN specialised agencies and related bodies had some form of statistical division, providing statistics of their own sphere of responsibility: for example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Tourism Organisation (WTO/OMT), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS/HABITAT), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Last, and certainly by no means least, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the World Bank Group and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), later known as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) also set up thriving statistical services.

***Who co-ordinates the co-ordinators?***

As can be seen from the previous section, there is a large number of international and supranational statistical offices operating. Some are specialised in one or a limited number of areas of statistics, whilst others have a much wider remit. They are all responsible in some way for ensuring proper co-ordination of standards in the countries within their sphere of responsibility. Some might say that to ensure co-ordination of them on a global basis would be a difficult and thankless task. Such a task fell within the mandate of the UN's Administrative Committee on Co-ordination Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities (ACC-SCSA), which met annually on thirty-five occasions before being discontinued in 2001 and replaced by an Inter-Agency meeting on Statistics which met for the first time in September 2002. The ACC-SCSA (as well as reporting to UN Administrative Committee on Co-ordination) reported to the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination (WGISPC). The (WGISPC) working group of the Commission, which had been meeting in the years between the biennial meeting of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC), was later replaced by annual meetings of the UNSC.

The international community had for some time recognised the need for co-ordination and that ACC-SCSA lacked the power to do anything about it, even with the backup of the Statistical Commission. Co-ordination was a central issue addressed by the Independent Review Group on the Global Statistical System under Willem Begeer (Netherlands) which completed its work in 1992 and recommended, inter alia, "integrated programmes" of data collection, data processing, dissemination of statistics, construction and revision of standards and technical assistance.

As a response to this, the 1992 WGISPC decided to set up a number of Task Forces and assign convenors: National Accounts (convenor: Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts); Trade Statistics (convenor: GATT); Industrial and Construction Statistics (convenor: OECD); Finance Statistics (convenor: IMF); Price Statistics and the ICP (convenor: Eurostat); and Environment Statistics (convenor: UNSTAT). Although the first two of these were already in existence, this was a first attempt at self-policing co-ordination.

The mandate of each task force was to determine what was being done by the various actors, assess problems, duplication, weaknesses, imbalances and priority gaps, study how to carry out an audit of the outputs, review the publications and take agreed actions to improve the system-wide work. They functioned quite well and some were disbanded within a few years, not because they had failed, but because they had achieved their original aims, or because they had been overtaken by events (e.g. the creation of the "city groups", which were more geared towards countries that were interested in developing ideas further in various spheres of statistics).

The CES noted that co-ordination was also a problem in the ECE region. There was no central official co-ordinating mechanism but there were three dominant actors: ECE, OECD and Eurostat whose memberships showed marked similarities.

At the time of writing, the Conference of European Statisticians consists of 55 member countries. Of these, 25 are OECD members and 18 are EU-EEA members. Of the 13 candidate countries for EU membership, 5 were already members of OECD. The overlap of the constituencies of the CES, OECD and Eurostat was obvious. Although the policy needs of the three organisations were different, the statistics they needed were often very similar.

The logical co-ordinator of the co-ordinators in Europe was be the Conference itself.

### *Working together: the first steps*

Towards the end of the 1980s there had been some efforts towards sharing the burden of data collection and methodology development. Early efforts between Eurostat and OECD included initiatives in Purchasing Power Parities and Unemployment statistics.

There was a formal point on the CES agenda each year entitled "Co-operation of the ECE secretariat with other international organisations". Here mention was made, inter alia, of the European Comparison Project as part of the International Comparison Project (which produces the Purchasing Power Parities tables), co-ordination of classifications, first efforts of reducing response burdens on national statistical institutes and the participation of the ECE as an observer in Eurostat's DGINS (Directors General of National Statistical Institutes) Conferences.

However, increasingly, at meetings of both the CES and the Statistical Commission, a number of countries felt that greater efforts could be made in other areas, especially in the domain of data collection. Here, there was an additional problem of conflicting sources of data caused by the fact that the "horizontal" international statistical offices, dealing with the broad spectrum of statistics, used the national statistical institutes as a source, whilst the specialised agencies compiled and published data from individual ministries. There was some reluctance to tinker with such arrangements as it was felt that they at least ensured a steady stream of statistics.

After the 1990 CES plenary session, there was the first meeting of an Intersecretariat Group on statistical co-operation with the Central and Eastern European countries. This group consisted of Eurostat, OECD, ECE, IMF, World Bank, ILO and UNSD. The purpose was to avoid duplication of projects, which was an important task given the number of actors in the field (not to mention the substantial new resources coming on-line). OECD prepared a questionnaire asking for details of current projects, Eurostat created a database with the results and ECE issued a regular Newsletter on Transition Projects. This was to be the first of a number of co-operative initiatives involving the three organisations.

### *Increasing demands in the European Community*

From the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s there was increasing political integration in the European Community. This had profound effects on statistics.

The first catalyst was pragmatic. The Community had decided that its activities should be funded by its "own resources". Traditionally these had been the levies and duties on imports and a proportion of the Value Added Tax base. In 1988 it was decided that a further basis for collection of funds from the Member States to be added: one based on the Gross National Product (GNP).

It seemed simple enough to the politicians who decided on the policy, but to statisticians it was a new concept. The main interest of GNP had traditionally been its evolution, the "growth" of the economy. The actual level, whilst giving a rough idea of the relative income or wealth of a country, was seen to be of lesser importance. Things changed when substantial sums of money started to become involved! The result was a Directive on the Harmonisation of the Compilation GNP which was intended to ensure that all countries were abiding by the same rules. This basically stated that GNP should be calculated according to the rules of the 1973 European System of Integrated Economic Accounts (ESA-73), which was based on the 1968 System of National Accounts (SNA-68).

However, it soon became apparent that ESA-73 was not adequate for this purpose and that further definitions were necessary. As a result a great deal of work was done and in some cases, complementary European Legislation was passed, in areas such as taxes linked to production and imports, production and import subsidies, the distinction between "other taxes linked to production" and "intermediate consumption", exhaustiveness and output of housing services.

The next statistical bombshell to hit the European Community was the Single Market. This had the effect of dismantling customs formalities at borders between the Member States and with them went the only source of trade statistics. However users were still convinced of a need for these statistics. The result was the Intrastat system that collected data on intra-Community trade from the exporters and importers.

Just as the European Statistical System was about to implement the Intrastat system, the Treaty on European Union was signed in Maastricht. This turned the Community into a Union, but also proposed the setting up of a Common Currency. The Treaty stipulated that the economies of the countries that would participate in this ambitious project had to be sufficiently convergent, so it decreed some criteria for qualification for the currency. These were based on participation in the existing European Monetary System, price stability, interest rates and government debt and deficit.

Once again, at the time that the Treaty was signed, it seemed a simple enough idea so there was little debate as to the statistical implications. However, it very soon became clear that the definitions of inflation and government debt and deficit were far from being similar in member countries.

The first job would be to implement a Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices – a task so daunting that, whilst it had been considered for a number of years, no-one had dared to do it for fear of being seen to be meddling with national indicators of inflation. But a common index was

required according to the Treaty and for the statisticians to throw their hands up and say it was an impossible task would have been unthinkable, so a harmonised index was created. It was decided to start with the lowest common denominators so the index first saw the light of day as an interim index, excluding items that were traditionally treated differently in the Member States, such as owner-occupied housing. The index itself appeared in January 1997 after resolving contentious issues such as the coverage, the products, the formula to be used, and minimum standards for quality, weights and prices.

At the time of writing, the Euro notes and coins have been in circulation for less than a year and the major preoccupation for Eurostat in this field is to provide the European Central Bank and the European Commission's services with the statistics that they need to administer the currency. To this end, the European Council adopted the EMU statistics action plan in 2000, an ambitious programme designed to improve the availability, quality and timeliness of Euro-zone statistics. The work continues!

### *How to react to the new European order in a global context*

The drive forward in the European Community had been acknowledged by Carlo Malaguerra, chairman of the CES, in his opening address to the Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference in February 1990. The purpose of the meeting was to consider new ways of working that had been necessitated not only by developments in Eastern Europe, but also in the West: " …, sur le plan européen, Eurostat est devenu l'organe de référence d'une politique statistique commune, se concrétisant par des concepts et des données harmonisées" *[editor: this can be translated roughly as '… on the Enropean level, Eurostat became the point of reference for a common statistical policy, that was characterised by harmonized statistical concepts and data']* and that the creation of the European Economic Area (EEA), creating the European Statistical System, consisting of the Community and all bar one of the EFTA countries, had the effect of "… renforcer davantage le rôle d'Eurostat en tant que centre gravitationnel de la coopération statistique en Europe de l'Ouest" *[editor: 'reinforcing even further the role of Eurostat as the centre of gravity for statistical cooperation in Western Europe']*.

The next year, OECD and Eurostat made a joint declaration on Strengthening the International Statistical System. It was noted that the preparation for the Single Market in Europe had accelerated moves towards greater harmonisation of statistics and their standards in a number of areas. This pace could not be slowed (and indeed it would have to be accelerated even further with the move towards the proposed Common Currency). The declaration noted that OECD's job, as the bridge linking Europe with Northern America and the Pacific Rim, was to reconcile these needs with those of the other economically advanced countries. ECE was the forum for reconciling these needs with those of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The declaration foresaw a number of measures: co-ordination of planning of work programmes, interchange of documentation, consultation on the preparation of documents and

collaboration in drafting manuals containing new system and standards. It also proposed two concrete actions in association with the ECE: the participation of OECD and Eurostat as permanent observers in the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians and the creation of an intersecretariat working group consisting of ECE, OECD and Eurostat which would be responsible for reviewing and co-ordinating the three organisations annual work programmes.

Organising work within the ECE region in this way would not only benefit the EC and non-EC members of the OECD equally, but also enable the full participation of the Central and Eastern European countries. This would allow UNSD to devote more of its resources to less developed countries.

### *Joint Programme Review*

So the ECE/Eurostat/OECD Intersecretariat for International Co-ordination in Statistics, or Joint Programme Review (JPR), as it became known, was born.

It first met in Luxembourg on 26 and 27 September 1991. It consisted of opening and closing plenaries, fourteen sectoral meetings and two excellent lunches. Four representatives of ECE made the trip from Geneva and 20 from OECD in Paris. As hosts, Eurostat had many more officials able to participate.

The atmosphere in the run-up to the meeting was not as warm as might have been expected. An article in the Economist of 5 October 1991 reported the meeting under the headline “Bad form”. It stated that the OECD delegation from Paris “headed glumly” to Luxembourg and that “many of them had an uncomfortable feeling that the real topic was the eventual elimination of their own jobs”. Interestingly the Economist failed to note that ECE was involved in the meeting at all!

In reality the atmosphere of the meeting was not as icy as the Economist would have us believe (possibly the lunches had something to do with this). There was a further two day meeting in 1992, but over the years trilateral contacts were built up and co-operation improved so much that the formal meetings were done away with and the Joint Programme Review became a one hour get-together of the heads of the three statistical offices before one of the CES Bureau meetings each year.

### *Integrated Presentation of Work Programmes*

In many ways, the JPR was a means to an end. Both the 1991 OECD-Eurostat statement and the Begeer Review Group had alluded to the closer alignment of work programmes. A first joint presentation of work programmes had, for many years been tabled at sessions of the Statistical Commission. However, this document had no practical effect on co-ordination since it was merely a list of the international organisations (normally not comprehensive) showing their past activities

(again, often not comprehensive). No effort was made to link the work in the same areas of the different organisations.

At the end of 1992, the CES Bureau felt that there was a need for on Integrated Presentation (IP) of work programmes. Well, actually, what they really wanted was a single integrated programme, but that would never be possible. It is important to differentiate between an "integrated programme" and the IP, an integrated presentation of work programmes. OECD is answerable to its Council and Eurostat to the appropriate European Institutions (its five-year programme, for example, is based on a proposal by the European Commission and approved jointly by the European Council and European Parliament, but its annual programme is approved by the European Commission itself). The ECE's programme, of course, is approved by the CES plenary session.

It was agreed that the IP would be structured around the Conference's programme and the other organisations would reclassify their activities according to that same nomenclature. Initially it would consist of the work of the three main organisations, but would eventually include the activities of all international and supranational organisations active in the ECE region.

The first attempt was made in early 1993 and a document containing the activities and planned meetings was presented to the CES plenary session in June of that year. It was rather rough and ready: the contributions were far from homogeneous with the length of text bearing little relation to the amount of resources being allocated to the activity by each organisation (nor, indeed, the results being achieved!), but it was a start.

As time went on, more and more organisations were added to the list of contributors: the Statistical Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States, IMF, World Bank, UNSD, WHO, FAO and other major contributors to the global statistical system. It was to become a true compendium of all international activity in the region.

A major development in the early years of the IP was the appointment of a "rapporteur" or "focal point" for each programme element. The duty of the rapporteur, who would be one of the organisations most active in that field, would be to examine the current version of the IP and report on issues of duplication or gaps. The rapporteur was also invited to specify a strategic aim for the upcoming years. In some way the rapporteur role was similar to that of the "convenor" of the task forces set up on a global level. The rapporteurs' reports are examined once every two years on a rolling basis by the Bureau of the Conference.

It has been a source of some frustration to those who compile the IP (and compiling is what is entailed: editing the texts of an already existing programme to a manageable size and then reclassifying it) that the final uses of the document are not apparent. The compilers find themselves awkwardly placed. On the one side there are statisticians in their own organisation who regard this work as duplicating the programming and reporting activities that they already perform. On the other side is the Conference which wants more and more from the IP. And only rarely, it seems, does one come across anyone who ever admits to having read it!

But the process involved in preparing the document, and the job of the rapporteur, ensured that any duplication there may have been should be eliminated before the document ever reaches its intended audience. Similar meetings and working groups being held close together, overlapping data collections and parallel activities all become rather obvious when they are placed close together in a single presentation. This may be one reason why the JPR (ECE/OECD/Eurostat Joint Programme Review) gradually became less relevant than it had been in the beginning.

More to the point, the compilation of the IP did encourage statisticians in the relevant organisations to work together in a way they did not always do before. Two, of the many, success stories are the Revision of UN Recommendations on International Migration which was a combined effort of UNSD the United Nations Population Division, OECD, ILO, ECE, Eurostat and the co-operation between WTO and OECD Tourism Satellite accounts.

### *Conclusion*

The European Union is unique from a political point of view. It is also unique in the sense that its statistical programmes, standards and data collections are laid down in law. There are other unions and associations in other geographic regions but, for now, none with the legal back-up that the EU has. Neither is a similar arrangement likely to exist in the short-term (it takes a while to set up!). The only foreseeable development is the forthcoming expansion of the EU to up to thirteen new countries.

The unique legislative base gives support in terms of statistical development to the thrust of political will in the EU. For example, whilst harmonisation of national consumer prices indices might have seemed a nice idea to the international statistical community for a long time, the fact that the EU had decided that it wanted a common currency and that the countries that were to participate in it would have to have converging inflation rates meant that a common measure of inflation just had to be developed.

Similarly, when the Single Market was first mooted and with it the concept of having no customs formalities for trade between countries, an alternative system for measuring trade just had to be developed.

Once the agreed standards are adopted, the EU Member States are obliged to adopt them, unlike situations that we have witnessed where countries choose not to adopt internationally agreed standards.

Statisticians are quick to complain when politicians act first and think of statistics later, but on these and many other occasions "necessity has certainly been the mother of invention".

But the world cannot just let countries or groups of countries go it alone. That would be anarchy. So, who should co-ordinate on a global basis? Who should have the authority as global co-ordinator? The Statistical Commission is effectively the management board of world statistics.

Would it not prefer its secretariat, the United Nations Statistical Division, to concentrate its resources on capacity building for the countries that still need the basic building blocks of a national statistical system?

A global IP has been mooted on several occasions and in some respects it has been partly implemented: the inventories of data collection activities, of methodology and of development indicators. Is it worth going further? Probably not. The added resources needed to make an IP that is completely comprehensive on a global basis would most likely outweigh its added value.

"Creative ambiguity" has been a phrase much used in the context of the CES with regard to the responsibilities within the CES region. A similar expression might be used to describe co-ordination within today's global statistical system: "controlled anarchy".

To the outsider the fact that countries, and groups of countries, need to move at a different speed than the rest of the world may appear to be "anarchy". But they only really do so within the constraints of the "controls", checks and balances, provided by the co-ordination mechanisms of the international statistical system under the aegis of the Statistical Commission. These controls include the "city groups", the "task forces", the JPR and the IP.

During the fifth decade of its existence, the Conference of European Statisticians, having developed the JPR and the IP, fulfilled this "controlling" role for the United Nations.

# CHAPTER 9

# The Future of Official Statistics[1]

## *The context and the mission: redefining the public service of official statistics for the next 50 years*

The last 50 years have witnessed big changes in the context in which official statistics plays its role. Globalisation and technological change have brought about new risks and opportunities. Decision making by individuals, collective players, business and governments has become much more complex and critical. Official statistics aims at providing a set of public goods in the field of information. More broadly statistics (the science of the state) aims at bringing science into the art of government. Both the role of science (policy analysis) in policy-making, and the nature of the universal service of public information have been strongly affected by the new environment. How, and why?

In the 1951-1953 period, at the time when conventionally we place the establishment of the Conference of European Statisticians, King George VI of England and Joseph Stalin were still alive. The context that would characterise Europe and North America for the years to come was taking shape through the accelerated building up of the cold war and the arms race, and the first attempts at bringing together Western Europe in a common institutional framework through the Schuman Plan, the European Defence Community and the Council of Europe. However, it is undoubted that it was events like the explosion of the revolution in Cuba or the military coup ousting King Farouk of Egypt that left a mark on those years; events that it would have been very difficult to predict. Even more difficult would have been forecasting that in 1951 the first business computer would be introduced, the theoretical basis for the integrated circuit would be established and the polio vaccine would have been developed. Probably more than anything else, 1953, the year of the first meeting of the Conference of European Statisticians as a Principal Subsidiary Body of the ECE, will be remembered for the invention of cinemascope, the reaching of the top of Mount Everest and the first successful open-heart surgery operation. In spite of the powerful means available, we have been unable to anticipate events like the fall of the Berlin wall or the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001. Projecting into the future the inner trends in official statistics is extra-ordinarily complex; but identifying the crucial features shaping the context in which official statistics operates are an almost “impossible mission”.

Being fully aware of these inherent difficulties, I will limit my speculations to two sets of contextual factors that proved to be of decisive importance in the past in influencing the activities and the mission itself of official statistics: 1) the role of science in government; and 2) the

[1] This chapter was written by Paolo Garonna (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

conditions on which the "public good" function of statistics are based. Both these profiles are going to be substantially affected by the changing environment, as was the case in the past 50 years. Let me then formulate a few hypotheses on the main direction of these changes, and their implications for statistics.

### *The role of science in government*

It is difficult to imagine how the exceptional circumstances that characterised the relationship between science and government in the immediate post-war period, as all other "golden ages" of official statistics, can be maintained or recreated in the future. The reconstruction of Europe, and the establishment of the post-war international order, attracted the commitment and direct participation of the best minds of the time as government advisors or officials, or as international civil servants in international organisations. Only in the Renaissance or at the time of the Enlightenment and the French revolution, was there such a symbiotic relation between public functions and science, particularly social science, that we find in the 1950s and 1960s. The mobilisation of intelligence and conscience stimulated by the war effort, but also the profound alienation from emotional politics, religious or ethnic fanaticism, and radical confrontations inherited from the human tragedies of the war period were in large part responsible for the sense of extra-ordinary commitment felt in the research community. This commitment was gradually eroded in the following decades, and it is highly improbable that it will come back in the future without a deliberate effort and investment in the social capital of scientists and statisticians. Science has been developing and prospering increasingly in the private sector, driven by patents and applications. It is most likely that it will continue to do so. It will also continue to be structured, or better un-structured, fragmented and disintegrated in competing academic and professional compartments. Policy-making and politics is today dominated by emotions, passions and interests, lobbying and co-operative or non-cooperative games. In post-war Europe, there was a deeply felt sentiment that can be captured by the famous dictum of Beaulieu: "The contrary of violence and oppression is not sweetness and love. The contrary of violence and oppression is reason!" It will take a deliberate and sustained effort to reconstruct such environmental conditions, thereby enhancing the role of science in government through policy analysis and publicly oriented research, and opening up social science to contribute significantly to policy-making. This "culture", which is made up of both popular sentiment and epistemology, is essential to upgrade the profile of official statistics. I suggest two practical litmus tests for checking the state of the environment: does a methodological statistician or a mathematical economist consider engaging in policy-making a waste of time, or at least a pleasant diversion? Is a social scientist recognised as such in academia and research circles, as was the case of Richard Stone or earlier Adam Smith, rather than having to clearly demarcate his professional skills and affiliations between sociology, economics and statistics? In the prologue to his inspiring last book on "British empiricists in the social sciences", Richard Stone wrote: "The eleven men and one woman who are the chief protagonists of my story came from all walks in life and had very different careers, but had one thing in common: none of them had any formal training in the fields to which they contributed so much" (p.xxi, Stone 1997).

A significant common feature of the exceptional environmental conditions characterising the golden ages of "science in government" and statistics is the prevailing interest in international affairs. This was the case in the post-war period, but also in the earlier phases of enthusiasm for science. In European history, international relations largely predate the nation-state. They have seen a leadership role of scientists and researchers (think of the "clerici vagantes" and the "Universitates" in the Middle Ages) for centuries. The nation-state prerogative over foreign policy (which is today seen as a fundamental attribute of sovereignty, but in fact corresponds to a rather limited experience in the history of human civilisation) is being gradually eroded in the current period. This is due not only to the increasing role of international and supra-national organisations, but even more to the increasing activism of civil society, both business and community organisations, in international affairs. Statistics being a universal language, statisticians have generally considered that it is part of their mission to give a higher profile to the international dimension in policy-making. Indeed, rational and knowledge-based policy making in a globalizing world cannot but open up to international considerations. But this process is finding and will find strong resistance, as the politics of passions, (short-term) interests and emotions push inexorably in the opposite direction of nationalism and protectionism. Creating artificial cohesion by identifying a common enemy that is diverse or foreign is still the most successfully practised trick of collective psychology and bad leadership. An "open society" environment therefore cannot happen, and will not happen, by itself. It requires a deliberate and sustained effort in all relevant forums, by all interested communities, research, business and government, national and international, including, certainly, statisticians and the CES. We cannot count on invisible hands in international markets and international relations to bring science and policy analysis into decision-making. It will be the challenge, and the responsibility of official statistics to find the mechanisms and the necessary commitment for orienting the policy debate and public opinion towards international issues and considerations. Moreover, the role of the state in science and knowledge, well beyond the concerns of the public sector unions, and the organisation of science and research, will have to be redefined in relation to the requirements of public policy, the contribution of market forces and possible public private partnerships.

In the context of these ambitious goals, statistics is not simply one of the Muses, but – as the "science of the state" – is the discipline that has the main responsibility in promoting and supporting an evidence-based science-driven approach to policy making.

### *Official statistics as a public good*

The trend in the evolution of the factors affecting the relationship between official statistics and statistics as a science is relatively easier to identify. There were basically in the last 50 years two large waves. First, in the immediate post-war period, on the basis of the prevailing Keynesian or mixed economy philosophies, and in reaction to the interwar excess of liberalism, the role of government in the economy and society grew, and with it the role of official statistics. From the 1980's onwards, an opposite wave took hold, leading to the retrenchment of government, an extension of market mechanisms and a wider role for civil society. This pro-market phase was inevitably accompanied on the whole by a certain reduction in the scope and significance of official

statistics. It reached its peak at the beginning of the transition in central and Eastern Europe, under the enthusiasm for the shock therapies of market liberalisation, which the reforming economies born out of the collapse of communism embarked upon. We live now in an environment that is characterised by a much more pragmatic and less ideological approach, in which both markets and policies are seen as having to play their key roles. As such a climate consolidates – and I believe that it must, and will - the real challenge posed by the new context to official statistics will more clearly appear in its great complexity: understanding the new meaning of the public good element inherent in official statistics.

Since public statistics was born, in fact, official statistics has been, by and large, a "natural" monopoly. Carrying out a population census, organising a large and complex sample survey (like the labour force survey), setting up statistical registers, making information available out of government files; all these have been, and are, operations requiring the strength and authority of the state. Without the government statistical services, basic information on population, the economy and society would not have been collected and made available to the public. In the past, and even now, some statistical operations have required the support of the army or the police, the threat of administrative sanctions, and in some cases even the imposition of curfews (this was the case in the last census in Turkey) -- in sum, the supreme authority of the state. But plausibly, this is not going to be the case for much longer!

This situation in fact is gradually, but inexorably, changing. Technical change is making available to the private sector means and tools enabling the collection and dissemination of detailed information at a reasonable price. The statistical literacy and education of the public, the media, the public administrations, business and society are growing, to the extent that the growing demand for data cannot be satisfied simply by the provision of basic aggregate information as an undifferentiated public good. People want to know more, and want information that is more detailed, more targeted to specific needs and more timely. Such a process is particularly visible in the field of health, education and social security. The direct provision of public data is becoming increasingly insufficient, and to a large extent unnecessary, considering the parallel development of market forces and privately produced databases. In the not too distant future the greatest part of data of public interest and concern will be produced by the private sector, business organisations, privatised utilities, internet agencies, manpower intermediaries and consultancy and analysis firms. In some cases the quality of the data will be better than that possible in the public sector, and the costs could become more affordable in the market, particularly in relation to the response burden. Already crucial data on good governance, technological change, security, the environment, development, freedom, security, labour market rigidity, etc. are produced outside the conventional boundaries of official statistics. Official statisticians may have legitimate reservations about the quality of these data, but the fact is that policy makers and the general public use them, and that no better alternative sources are available. Even norms and standards for the production of data are increasingly being developed in the private sector under the pressure of demand and policy. While statisticians have painstakingly engaged in the lengthy and cumbersome process of updating official concepts, classifications and definitions, or agreeing on core indicators, the policy world is full of benchmarks, rankings and indicators, and the policy debates make wide use of them.

If official statistics sees its battle simply as one of competing with private sector dynamism, showing that it is capable of more methodological soundness and better quality standards, improving organisation and techniques for carrying out the same operations of the past and delivering more or less the same products, I fear the outlook is not bright. The battle cannot be won on those terms. The superiority of the market in delivering efficiency and customer satisfaction has been clearly established. The main challenge is another one: in the information society of today, and even more in that of tomorrow, what public information goods or services cannot be provided by the market, at market conditions, or by the market alone? How do we give access to basic information to all citizens? How do we bridge the information gaps, which increasingly translate themselves also into knowledge gaps, and therefore poverty and social exclusion? How do we maintain public trust in figures, and correspondingly the credibility of the statistical system?

Responding to these questions will require an analysis of the conditions in which statistics will operate in the future, including technology, the institutional framework, economic factors, and the definition of a new and clearer role of the public sector, and public interest, in statistics.

### *The tools of science. Market failures, state failures and science failures*

Statistics has made progress in four main areas: a) the statistics of populations (censuses, registers and administrative data); b) the statistics of inference and sampling (major sample surveys); c) complex stochastic systems (modelling, forecasting, multivariate data systems analysis); and d) variability and uncertainty (risk assessment and management). Progress, however, has remained so far still largely under-exploited for the purpose of policy making. Why? What benefits can the new developments bring to decision makers? How can they support the new statistical “commons”?

In Bartholomew (1995), we find a useful partition of the field of statistics as a science, which can be taken as a basis for reviewing the conditions under which official statistics will have to redefine its public policy role in the future.

### *Statistics of populations*

First, we have the statistics of populations and large data sets. It is the oldest and still most common type of activity of official statistics. The collection and presentation of data in tabular or graphical form has been at the heart of biometry and econometrics. New methods of automatic data collection, processing and disseminating have led to a revival of this form of activity (e.g. CAPI or CATI). Today methods are available for displaying and summarising data that can be of great use in policy analysis and decisions (e.g. visualisation techniques, data mining, geographic information systems).

In the most advanced countries, and branches of government, a wealth of data and data sources are used for policy decisions: in government debt departments, central banks and regulatory agencies data are used daily for complex and delicate decisions, particularly in monetary and fiscal policies. However, unfortunately, a considerable amount of the data generated by the policy process or needed for managing and evaluating policies are not exploited. Obstacles are found in the lack of policy-friendly applications and statistical skills in public administration, in shortcomings in management and control systems, and in the lack of transparency in government decision-making. An increasingly constraining factor is the need for timeliness; if data are not available at the right time, decisions have to be based on more qualitative or intuitive considerations. In the future I expect massive investment will be made in developing databases and statistical applications for policy monitoring and evaluation. The progress made in promoting a statistical culture in government and public administration promises well in this context. Equally promising are the lower costs and easier access to such tools being provided by outsourcing or joint ventures with the private sector. The risk, however, is that the much improved information infrastructure for policy formulation and delivery will not be transparent enough. In other words, that it will not be a "public good", but rather a technical tool for government.

### *Statistics of Sampling and Inference*

The second type of statistics is the statistics of random sampling and inference. The application of the Fisherian revolution to government statistics dates back several decades in most advanced systems, but has made remarkable headway also in the transition and developing world thanks to the efforts of the UN, the World Bank and other support agencies (see for a survey, Ryten 2001): for instance the National Household Survey Capability Programme in the UN, and the Living Standards Measurement Study of the World Bank. The main manifestation of such applications is in the development of major sample surveys, such as the labour force survey, the household consumption survey, the multipurpose and/or comprehensive sample surveys, time use surveys, panel surveys, etc. The construction of sampling frames, and the utilisation of sampling and data editing techniques have become common practise in statistical offices, and are widely used by government research and forecasting bureaux. Thanks to sampling and inference, the power of probability theory and the principles of stochastic modelling have penetrated the deterministic and authority-based walls of officialdom. It is a revolution that, even if it has taken root in many countries, can still go a long way ahead. It will fully bear its fruits only when it will spread to all government departments, at national and local level. But it also will have to come to terms in the future with the fact that the outside world, the realm of non-officialdom, has become increasingly capable of conducting sample surveys, and sometimes even very large ones. Major efforts have gone into the organisational aspects of running a survey in a public sector environment, particularly the organisation of interviewers, the data collection and processing, the dissemination and analysis of the results. We have now come to learn that much of the organisation of sample surveys can generally be more flexibly arranged under commercial law and in competition. In a well-developed and competitive market for statistical surveys, non-sampling errors probably can be more effectively addressed than in the public system. I foresee therefore that the importance of large

regular sample surveys in official statistics will decrease, and that much wider use will be made of data drawn from administrative sources, that will be integrated, checked and balanced with small sample surveys (e.g. quality checks, post-enumeration surveys, etc.) that have been outsourced to the private sector. The condition for this development to occur is that the capacity for methodological work in government departments (not only in research sections of statistical offices) will have to be increased and consolidated. Wherever there is a data collection activity underway in the public sector, and that should be almost everywhere, there should also be a corresponding capacity for understanding inference and sampling, and for enhancing the quality of data through editing, experimental design and data integration. Data matching and data merging would allow a very powerful exploitation of administrative data, and the construction of comprehensive and detailed data warehouses.

### *Statistics of Complex Stochastic Systems*

Unfortunately many of the challenging policy questions of the future cannot be dealt with simply by type one and type two statistics. Not only are randomisation and replication rarely possible in the policy world, but measurement, and particularly the statistical measurement of the key variables at play, cannot be taken for granted, as it usually is. In the increasingly complex and changing world we live in, and in the future will be living in, measurement has become an intriguing statistical and conceptual issue, of paramount consequence for policy. When we deal with concepts like human security, good governance, corruption, the networked economy, social capital, inequality and social exclusion, etc., measurement aspects cannot be assumed away, or left aside. As in the past in relation to concepts like the quality of life, business confidence, welfare or even intelligence and happiness, statistics has been called upon to play a key role in developing a quantitative framework in which such questions can be precisely framed and scientifically answered. This implies focusing on measurement, good measurement, agreed standards for comparable, robust and consistent measurement, and sound theoretical frameworks. Official statistics can and should take a key role in identifying the key analytical and policy issues, promoting public investment in the critical areas of research and measurement methodology, engaging in partnerships with the world of research in universities or in the private sector, feeding the results not only to decision makers, but also to the public for information and policy debate. Measurement implies not only theory, but also a lot of data for experimental testing. These data can be much more easily collected and analysed now. It implies also sophisticated modelling and forecasting techniques (for instance in models with latent variables, or dynamic micro-simulation models). Lobbying for statistical research and statistical investment funding is not new in the world of official statistics. It will deserve however a much more determined effort, and hopefully much more success. “Secondary analysis of large data sets … needs substantial resources though still modest when compared with a supercomputer or a linear accelerator. Why is it that ‘big science’ is confined to the physical end of the scientific spectrum?” (Bartholomew, op. cit. p.9).

### *Statistics of Variability and Uncertainty*

There is finally a fourth type of statistics, which deals with variability and uncertainty, and that applies statistical tools and methods to the analysis, assessment and management of risk and variability. The need for good type 4 statistics is obvious (says Bartholomew), but this is the least explored area of applications in government. The potential is enormous and the possible applications very wide-ranging: from financial markets to consumption, from job search to environmental risk assessment, from impact analysis to evaluation and training. We can expect that it will explode in the coming years. Applying statistical data and techniques, and correspondingly statistical skills, to provide policy advice on the widest possible range of issues where uncertainty and variability play a role is the major challenge for the future of official statistics. This will not only be beneficial to policy making in all areas, but will address directly the rising concerns for greater security and stability in the economy and society. Statisticians should raise their voice in public discussions on such topics. They indeed will certainly do so in support of management and government decisions as advisors, supporters or consultants. It will be important, however, that official statistics provide a "universal service" in this area, i.e. that it will develop a strategy for addressing security and stability concerns in favour not only of government and big business, but also of civil society and citizens as a whole. In other words, it will be important that advice on security and stability be provided by official statistics as a public good.

In conclusion, the context in which official statistics will operate in the future will open up new challenges and perspectives along the following four main directions:

- building data systems for policy monitoring and evaluation;
- enhancing data quality and data integration;
- investing in measurement for evidence-based policy dialogue;
- contributing to questions of uncertainty and variability.

### *The new frontiers of risk and uncertainty: A few examples*

I will discuss now a few instances where official statistics can and should be involved (as an example of the possible new public role of statistics in the future) in addressing the challenges posed by instability, insecurity, mobility and other contextual changes.

### *The Risk Society*

In his work on the "Risikogesellschaft", the German sociologist Ulrich Beck theorises the emergence of a new mode of social organisation, a new society characterised by risk, i.e. the "Risk Society". This line of thinking, common to other social researchers like A. Giddens, A.Touraine, R.Sennett and J.Habermas, marks a significant change of tone vis-à-vis previous social analysis, which saw risk, insecurity and instability as the negative consequences or the adjustment costs of

technological and economic processes. Beck and other authors instead see the new risks as the signals of a new phase of "modernisation", different from the one that, starting more than two centuries ago, through the Enlightenment and the industrial revolutions, gave birth to the industrial societies of to-day. The "new society" gives individuals new freedoms (we are all freedom's children), as it puts the individual at the centre of the economy and the polity, and unties her/him from conventional social organisations like social classes, cultural groups, trade unions and political affiliations. Obviously, in so doing, the risk society creates new threats: "with the growth of functional rationality (Zweckrationalität), consequences become increasingly non-measurable (Beck 1999, p.29)". Hence, new responsibilities and limits are assigned to science: "science becomes increasingly more necessary, but at the same time more insufficient for the socially meaningful definition of reality (ibidem, p.221)".

These references should suffice to highlight the strong links between this extremely popular, new thread of sociological thinking and my argument above on the prospects for more science in government, and more governance in science, and therefore my call for a bigger role for official statistics. Unfortunately, so far the suggestions of sociological imagination on the risk society have not stimulated quantitative analysis and in-depth empirical verifications. The burning issues of growing xenophobic nationalism, the rejection of politics by the young, the sometime violent antiglobalisation sentiments, religious intolerance and the return of protectionism in Europe and North America deserve serious analytical and statistical work, and a multidisciplinary convergence of efforts and expertise. It needs much more, therefore, than the "abstract theorisation" of a few academic schools, the in-passing comments in the specialised press, and the emotional reactions of mobilisation, advocacy or demonstrations.

The UN is at the core of the tensions and discussions, but also of the re-thinking or new thinking on the new society. It is therefore appropriate to think that the UN can, and should, play a leading role in stimulating and promoting cutting-edge social research, based on concrete evidence and policy relevant frameworks.

Beck proposes in one of his works a "Cosmopolitan Manifesto", as he believes that the risk society is either a world society promoting global dialogue, or will inevitably be a "non-society" of fractures, clashes of civilisations and emotional upheavals.

My dream for the next 50 years of official statistics is to see statisticians taking the lead in the analytical discussions on social change and provide evidence, advice and support to governments and policy stakeholders on how to reshape social policies in order to address the fears of systemic instability and the "angst" generated by the higher-order freedoms that we will have to cope with.

### *Human Security, New Forms of Conflict and Terrorism*

Security is a growing concern in the post-cold-war world we live in. The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center has increased the sense of insecurity and vulnerability of our societies, not only in advanced market economies, but also in transition and developing nations. Security tomorrow will be less and less a question of frontiers, inter-state wars and belligerent armies. It will be increasingly a matter of concern for citizens, their families, the civilian populations, the humanitarian disasters ensuing from internal conflicts, ethnic and religious intolerance, terrorism and human rights abuses. The discussion on how to adjust national and international security policies to the new threats is one of the most fertile and stimulating fields of policy analysis and debate. Mainstreaming security in broader development policies, addressing the economic aspects of security, and bridging the gap in national and international organisations between security and socio-economic development lines of thinking and acting are at the forefront of the international initiatives, with an increasingly active contribution of civil society organisations, business and NGOs.

However, the state of play of data, indicators and statistical concepts available to support an evidence-based policy dialogue on these complex and sensitive issues is generally considered to be totally inadequate. The Human Development Report in 1994 tried to construct an indicator of "human security", but it had to abandon it later because the statistical and conceptual bases of this exercise were considered to be unsatisfactory; and for good reason. Evidence available in the literature (see P. Garonna, 2002 for a survey) show that the number of conflicts in the 1990's has been globally decreasing, contrary to the previous trend in the cold war period which saw conflicts progressively grow and spread. This is somewhat in contrast with some commonly perceived beliefs. Moreover, Gurr and Wallensteen argued in a detailed quantitative, that this relatively positive trend is correlated with the sharp increase in peace agreements in the 1990's, many of which were brokered by the UN. If this is the case, it is somewhat paradoxical that the UN, which has invested most in peacekeeping operations, and that has also paid a high price in terms of lives lost in its operations, has not been capable of analysing its own success or to learn from this experience. The absence of official statistics on armed conflict and of an an authoritative source of data on it means that no robust guidance can be given as to which is the most suitable strategy for the policy community to use. The case for more resources being allocated to data-collection and data-quality promotion in this area appears to be overwhelming. But no convincing advocacy has been used to generate the required level of interest and support for it in the statistical community and the general public (see Mack 2002).

Migration analysis and statistics have shown that if reliable data are available to describe and understand the real trends, some of the excesses in political discussions due to irrational motives can be effectively contained or counteracted. The same should be true, a fortiori, in the case of the analysis of conflict and human security.

During the course of 2002, a prestigious North-American research institution will produce a monitoring report on human security with data benchmarks and indicators. As far as I know, the report has been prepared with no involvement or support from the community of official statisticians. I would not be surprised if some of the data used in the report present non-negligible problems of quality and comparability. But I would be much more concerned if the reaction of some well-intentioned statistician to such reports was merely one of criticism of the data and data use. In such a case, the image that official statistics would project into the policy analysis world would be one of detachment and irresponsibility: official statistics should not run the risk of appearing merely as the uncontaminated "Guardian" of its own irrelevance. Remaining relevant to the major issues in the policy agenda will be the main challenge for official statistics in the future.

### *The Enron Case: Implications for Official Statistics*

The consequences and the chain of events that were set in motion by the financial collapse of Enron will take time to fully unfold. The rethinking and policy debate on the information and governance infrastructures of the capitalist economy have been wide-ranging, and are probably the most radical since the follow-up to the Big Crash of 1929.

Here are a few comments on the main lessons learned and their implications for statistics:

- *Financial reporting and accounting standards*: The revision and updating of accounting standards and disclosure obligations have received a considerable boost. The EU is committed to issuing regulatory norms as part of the process, set in motion at the Barcelona summit, and leading to the full liberalisation of the capital market by 2005. There seems to be a renewed awareness of the need for harmonised international standards, and a more determined effort at overcoming the deadlock created by the conflicts of the past between the US and the EU. The Enron case has undermined the presumed superiority of the much more detailed and precise accounting standards in the U.S. The newly created International Accounting Standards Board is therefore proceeding more steadily towards the revision and the harmonisation of the standards. The SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) in the US is considering the opportunity of extending and improving the disclosure requirements of incorporated firms. As one commentator put it, "in order to detect flaws in corporate practises and correct malfunctioning mechanisms, sunlight is the best disinfectant".

  Implications: Official statisticians should be closely involved in discussions over accounting standards to make sure that the revised and harmonised standards do not conflict with national accounts internationally accepted criteria, and the current standards in business statistics. In the press, there have already been questions and complaints concerning the often diverging patterns shown by national accounts indicators and data drawn from company reports (e.g. the Standard & Poor 500 profit indices, see Financial Times newspaper, 8-4-2002, p.13). Statisticians should also identify more precisely what public opinion wishes to know about corporate practices, not only in relation to financial

information and competition, but also to environmental and labour conditions, safety and health risks, and social responsibility vis-à-vis community goals or local needs.

- *Audit failures and auditing standards*: The need for more stringent standards, and possibly rules and disclosure obligations to alleviate conflicts of interests in auditing practices is widely recognised. The discussion between those who favour a more stringent statutory regulation of the auditing profession, and those who prefer to leave it to professional self-regulation and the market, is now raging. The EU is planning to intervene with a set of legal instruments, among which a Recommendation on Auditor Independence, a Recommendation on minimum requirements for systems of external quality assurance, and the use of International Standards on Auditing, etc.

  Implications: The independence of official statisticians is among the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It has also been established as a principle in the Maastricht Treaty. However, the legal and even conventional frameworks for enforcing this principle are quite weak. The issue of enforcement and enforceability of the "Fundamental Principles" should be carefully revisited. Mechanisms for soft regulation and peer pressure should in theory work well, but they are also lacking in practice. Besides, the relationships between public statistics and auditing or regulatory agencies have to be strengthened and clarified. On the one hand, auditing activities generate a wealth of data that can and should be exploited for statistical purposes. But on the other hand, auditing requires good quality statistics. The question of giving auditors access to individual data, and the corresponding limitations imposed by confidentiality obligations, should be examined. In any case, it is undoubted that auditors and regulators are fundamental (potential) partners for the public statistical system.

- *Financial analysts and research*: The need to find appropriate mechanisms for preserving the integrity and objectivity of financial research, and related advice to customers, has been widely recognised and discussed. In a world where investment banking, trading and underwriting activities are becoming increasingly integrated with business advice and financial research, conflicts of interest and the requirements of integrity are difficult to monitor, control and assess, or even define. The Merryl Lynch agreement that was imposed by New York's Attorney General in May 2002 established important principles and safeguards, but it fell short of what most commentators were expecting and hoping for. Public confidence in the market, and the fundamental role of research, could be severely undermined by a lack of transparency and clarity over what is considered to be acceptable practice, and what should be sanctioned as unprofessional behaviour. The EU is considering the possibility of introducing Directives on financial analysts in order to regulate aspects of integrity applicable to financial analysis and research.

  Implications: The integrity aspects of financial analysis can be applied mutatis mutandis to policy analysis and statistics, their relations with the government of the day, and politics. These considerations apply not only at the national, but also at the international level. The establishment of mechanisms of accountability and/or separation should be considered. Financial analysts and business consultants are good customers of official

statistics. Increasingly they have become competitors in providing the market with the required data and indicators. In the future they should be more closely involved in statistical activities as partners, joining forces towards the improvement of the quality of the data, and sharing the credibility and the reputation of impartiality of official statistics;

- *Corporate Governance*: This is also an area where the EU is planning policy action. In particular, the High Level Group of Company Law Experts set up in 2002 has addressed a number of important corporate governance issues. Sound corporate governance practises are an essential component of "good governance" and social capital, and therefore an important area for policies aimed at bridging capacity gaps. It is of particular interests to transition economies.

  Implications: This is an area where indicators and best practices would be very useful. Exchanging experience on, and providing evidence of what works and does not work in an international policy dialogue exercise, and why, would have a high policy value.

- *Transparency in the International Financial System*: Banking supervision, capital adequacy requirements, norms and standards for financial stability have seen the active involvement of financial operators and public institutions, particularly the BIS and the IMF. Criteria for improving the quality of financial data and related macroeconomic and social statistics have been included in this framework.

  Implications: The programmes of the IMF in this context are extremely important and should be fully supported. However, there should be more involvement and collaboration with the international statistical institutions, such as the UN system. A more active stance should be taken by the statistical community in relation to the need to harmonise criteria for government finance statistics. Important progress was made in relation to the Maastricht convergence criteria of public deficit and debts. However, there are still many pending issues in order to ensure the full transparency and comparability of public accounts.

This overview of the implications of the Enron case for statistics shows how much relevant activity is underway that is of interest for official statisticians. Moreover, this example, like the preceding ones, shows the potential future role of official statistics in areas where there is an evident public interest at stake, and public information goods have to be provided. So far the statistical institutions have not played a major role in the discussions concerning the questions above, such as accounting and auditing standards and the regulation of financial analysis. This has to change. In the future, the institutions of official statistics should be fully involved and bring to the discussion the point of view of the ordinary citizen, the small investor, the consumers, etc. Bridging the gaps in access to information will remain an important task of official statistics, as the "guarantor of last resort" of public access to information in the information society and of the integrity of operation of the different information systems.

### *Managing conflict and competition: the changing role of information in democracy and the market economy. From equilibrium to dis-equilibrium*

Democracy and the market economy, in spite of their flaws and limitations, are the best systems available for managing conflict and competition. Information has always played a fundamental role in the functioning of both democracy and the market economy. In the (neo)classical approaches, public information is considered part of the infrastructure of a functioning market economy and pluralist democracy. In general equilibrium theory, for instance, it was generally assumed that economic agents operate under conditions of full and symmetric information; in other words the role of official statistics was somehow taken for granted, and related questions were assumed away. Instead, in the more modern theoretical approaches to the economic analysis of the information society, information is considered a key factor of dis-equilibrium and dynamic adjustment (for instance evolutionary theories, games theory, bargaining models, Nash equilibrium, etc.). In other words information is seen as a tool of competition and conflict; and it is used by economic agents for their own motives, be they profit or electoral gain. Information therefore is endogenous to the functioning of democracy and the market economy. At the same time, however, public information remains an essential precondition for democratic debate and market transactions. In the new theoretical context, however, the infrastructure element of public information must be redefined. Like other public services and public utilities, statistics as a public good means something different today, and will mean something different even more in the future: from the exclusive and direct provision of public data, statistical policies have to be re-oriented towards providing an enabling environment for the development of an advanced information sector in the market economy and in government. The public mission of official statistics must then be re-oriented towards other tasks, such as setting up an appropriate regulatory environment, playing the role of regulator, promoting innovation and advanced quality standards, redressing asymmetries in access to basic sources of information, supporting the use of information for knowledge-based decision making, promoting statistical education and “statistical culture" in the media and the public opinion, exercise moral suasion, etc.

### *Conclusions: Redefining the Mission of Official Statistics*

We can now draw on the previous discussion and identify the main directions of future activity for official statisticians. It is clear that in the information society public statistics will have to play its role in the midst of a complex network of public/private statistical tasks, activities and agents. This will certainly affect its mode of operation and production processes. Official statistics will no longer be, as in the past, the monopolistic provider of certain types of data, considered to be the minimum common database necessary for policy making and the citizens. Nor will it be the only institution responsible for setting statistical norms and standards. I believe the main mission of official statistics for the next 50 years can be summarised in the following two fundamental tasks:

### *Enhancing transparency and accountability in markets and public policies*

This will be the main public good function of official statistics in the information society. The scope of transparency goes well beyond the establishment of formal rules or regulations, and the respect of the rule of law. It implies public and private investments in social capital, i.e. the trust and cohesion that keeps a community together, sustains market transactions and enables democratic competition in the political arena. It implies an active policy stance on many policy fronts and by a multitude of stakeholders. It is a task requiring close collaboration between public and private players. Basically, one can distinguish between accountability of business decisions and accountability of policy decisions.

Both accountabilities require not only an appropriate regulatory framework, but also, and increasingly, a set of "soft rules", best practises, benchmarks, etc. Statistics and indicators play a fundamental role in soft regulations and in self-regulation. They are a pre-condition for peer dialogue and peer reviews, and they represent the building stones of a monitoring system (see Garonna and Menozzi 2001). Statistical systems should evolve towards the setting up of monitoring systems in government, and also supporting monitoring systems in the private system and in partnership with private players.

### *Bridging the statistical divide and guaranteeing basic information freedoms and rights*

The main objectives of official statistics have become the following: defining and implementing individual and collective rights to information; promoting access to information; promoting education to exploit the means and tools of the information society; dealing with abuses and malfeasance; guaranteeing freedom of access and circulation of information; promoting data quality; promoting evidence-based policy analysis and policy dialogue; etc. As an example and model of such an approach, reference can be made to the Aarhus Convention in the field of environmental information, which the ECE has promoted and is now implementing. This convention has inspired similar normative frameworks in other areas of policy making. To some extent, the principle of ensuring access to vital and basic information needed by the public is included in the "UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics". However, the degree of precision and the specific arrangements foreseen for enforcing this principle are far from clearly envisaged in the Fundamental Principles. Rather than defining these more specific and targeted norms of access in general, I believe it may be more appropriate to define them in relation to a specific policy field, like education, health or good governance, in close cooperation with policy experts and groups involved in these specific sectors.

As part of the guarantee of access to public information, the question of statistical norms and standards will emerge as playing a crucial role. In the future I expect the production of these norms to be quite different from the current practises at the national and international level. First, there will be many more players involved: not only statistical agencies, but also government departments, business organisations and other private players, like policy and financial analysts. Second, there

may be concurrent or even competing norms and standards in use, at least in an initial phase, which will leave to users, in the market or in government, the decision ultimately on which standard will come to dominate actual use and be adopted as the global one. Third, many standards will evolve with the use and the application of data and indicators to specific policy and analytical questions, rather than ex-ante. Often in fact there will be no time for following the normal gestation period and phases of statistical standards, which (as we know well) is quite lengthy and labour-intensive. Rather there will most likely be a case-law approach to norm setting, whereby best practise in a specific case will become a precedent, and acquire the normative strength and value of a precedent. That best practise would then be applied to similar cases, and progressively extended. Official statisticians will have to adjust to these new trends and to this more "diffused" and decentralised form of norm setting. In particular they will have to maintain and increase their moral and scientific authority and reputation as guardians of the best methods available, and as the depositary of up-to-date expertise and research capacity. Moreover, they will have to collaborate closely with users in policy analysis, in government and in civil society.

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## CHAPTER 10

# The People Behind the Conference Over the Past 50 Years[1]

### *Introduction*

This chapter presents an overview of some of the many different people who have contributed significantly to the Conference of European Statisticians over the course of the last 50 years and who played an important role in its life during that period. Although it provides a general overview of the 50-year history of the Conference, more details are given for the most recent two decades or so. There are two main reasons for this, and the first is that the first four decades of the life of the Conference have been chronicled elsewhere, and therefore in the interest of brevity, will not be repeated here.[2.] The second reason is that my first-hand knowledge of the Conference is restricted to the period from 1981 onwards when I first began to work in the ECE Statistical Division. In an attempt to compensate for my lack of a first-hand knowledge of the Conference during the first 25-30 years of its life, I have attempted to fill in some of the gaps in my knowledge not only by relying on the historical record of what has been previously published on the life of the Conference, but also by contacting several other persons who worked with the Conference in this earlier period.

I should also mention here that overview chapters of this type are necessarily selective in character, partly because in such chapters it is simply not possible to mention everyone who could or should be mentioned. However, the present text is also selective because it is inevitably influenced by both my memory and the personal experience that I have had with the Conference over the period of time that I have worked for it. Despite such weaknesses, it is still very important that an overview chapter like this one be as complete and as accurate as possible. To whatever extent the present draft contains such weaknesses, I apologize to both the readers and to the persons whose names I have not mentioned, or for whom the information given on them is incomplete or not fully correct.

Finally, I should add that the overview chapter is also selective in another important way, and that is that it is intentionally primarily focused on the plenary sessions of the Conference, for there are comparatively few references in it to the many hundreds of specialists in individual fields of statistics who have contributed significantly to the Conference over the course of the last 50 years. These statistical experts from many different fields of statistics have also played a very important role in the life of the Conference, primarily through the many hundreds of

[1] This chapter was written by John J. Kelly (see Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3).

[2.] See, for example, the special publication that was issued by the Federal Statistical Office of the Federal Republic of Germany on the occasion of the Conference's 40th anniversary, entitled "Statistics in the Democratic Process at the end of the 20th Century", edited by Egon Hölder, Carlo Malaguerra and György Vukovich (ISBN 3-8246-0336-5).

intergovernmental meetings in individual fields of statistics that the Conference has convened for experts in its work programme during the past 50 years, and through the statistical standards that have been developed at them in areas such as national accounts, purchasing power parities, the European Comparison programme, population and housing censuses, international migration statistics, information technology, environment statistics and other fields. Unfortunately, however, it has not been possible in this chapter to acknowledge in a more concrete way many of these specialists in individual fields of statistics from the national statistical offices throughout the ECE region who have also played a leading role in these important parts of the Conference's work.

### *The "Founding Fathers" of the Conference of European Statisticians*

Like most institutions of this type, the creation and establishment of the Conference of European Statisticians came about as the result of a process that lasted several years; as a result of the vision that a relatively small number of individuals had; and as a result of the major investments in time and effort that those individuals were prepared to make to convert their vision into reality. In this section tribute is paid to a handful of individuals who played a major role in bringing about the "birth" of the Conference of European Statisticians as we know it today:

- Dr. Ph. J. Idenburg, Director General, The Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics (and a member of the UN Statistical Commission in the late 1940s).

In the late 1940s Dr. Idenburg was a member of the UN Statistical Commission, and he was in the forefront of the small number of individuals who worked to establish an intergovernmental body in the field of statistics that would be composed of European countries and the United States, and that would be prepared to conduct the preparatory work that would be required to convert the recommendations of the UN Statistical Commission into practical achievements on a regional basis.

In April 1948, Dr. Idenburg transmitted to the ECE a "Memorandum concerning co-operation in the field of statistics", and shortly thereafter he and two of his colleagues, A Dufresne from Belgium and H. Bohr from Luxembourg, combined to propose the inclusion of the issues raised in that memorandum on the agenda of the 1948 session of the Economic Commission for Europe.

The 1948 meeting of the ECE was attended by the chief statisticians of ten European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) who came to show their support for the Idenburg-Benulux initiative. It was as a result of these initiatives, and of similar initiatives that Dr. Idenburg and his colleagues took at the United Nations Statistical Commission in New York, that called for the UN Secretary-General "to encourage and facilitate consultation among representatives of the statistical agencies of European governments upon statistical questions", and that led to the ECE and the UN Statistical Office in New York jointly organizing the 1949 and 1951 first ad hoc "Regional Meetings of European Statisticians" that were organised after the war. The first ad hoc meeting was held in

Geneva from 14-18 March 1949, and its officers were Mr. Idenburg of the Netherlands (Chairman) and Mr. Fajfr of Czechoslovakia (Vice-Chairman). The second ad hoc meeting was held in Geneva from 17-21 March 1951, and its officers were Mr. R.C. Geary of Ireland (Chairman) and Mr. Dufresne of Belgium (Vice-Chairman).

It was at the 1953 ad hoc Regional Meeting of European Statisticians, where the Conference of European Statisticians was actually elevated and converted into a full-fledged "Principal Subsidiary Body of the ECE", that the Conference was "born". The following are some of the other key actors who, together with Dr. Idenburg, played a major role in achieving this, and who together with Mr. Idenburg may be referred to as the "Founding Fathers" of the Conference of European Statisticians:

- Mr. B. Barberi, Director General of the NSI of Italy
- Mr. P.J. Bjerve, Director General of the NSI of Norway
- Mr. H. Campion, Director General of the NSI of the United Kingdom
- Mr. F.L.Closon, Director General of the NSI of France
- Mr. A. Dufresne, Director General of the NSI of Belgium
- Mr. G. Fürst, Director General of the NSI of the Federal Republic of Germany
- Mr. R.C. Geary, Director General of the NSI of Ireland
- Mr. Ph. J. Idenburg, Director General of the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Netherlands

### *The Objectives of the Conference Agreed upon by the Countries*

It was also at this 1953 meeting that the objectives (or the "Terms of Reference") of the Conference were agreed by the countries concerned. There were two objectives that the Conference specified for itself at that time,[3.] and they were:

- to improve national statistics and their international comparability, and

- to promote close coordination of the statistical activities in Europe of international organisations so as to achieve greater uniformity in concepts and definitions and to reduce to a minimum the burdens on national statistical offices.

[3.] At the time of the 1991 plenary session the Conference expanded these Terms of Reference to include the following as the third objective: "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" (see ECE/CES/38, Annex II).

### *The Elected Officers (Bureau Members) of the Conference, 1949-2002*

Since its inception, the Conference has been led by a "Bureau" consisting of a small number of individuals whom the Conference has elected to represent the larger CES membership and to prepare and organise the Conference's annual meeting. In the early years of its life the Bureau generally had from two to four members. From the early 1960s through 1990 it generally had four members, two of which came from Central and East European countries and two from Western Europe. In addition, during this period the general practice was to have the chairmanship of the Conference alternate every two years between each of these two main parts of the ECE region. In addition, this general practise of attempting to ensure some sort of "balance" between eastern and western Europe in electing the officers of the Conference also was accompanied by another general principle, and that was that neither the USA nor the USSR stood for election to serve as members of the Bureau. This latter practise was followed from 1953 until the early 1990s. Notwithstanding this, it should be noted that both the USSR and the USA were very actively involved in the life of the Conference throughout virtually the entire life of the Conference, and contributed substantially to it even though the presidents of the statistical offices of the two countries refrained from standing for election to the Bureau.

Throughout the past 50 years the Bureau of the Conference has acted as a type of "Steering Committee" for the Conference, in which the members of the Bureau whom countries had elected to represent them discussed and planned how best to advance the shared concerns of the entire CES membership. However, at its 1991 plenary session the Conference drew up new terms of reference for the CES Bureau whereby the size of the Bureau was increased from 4 to 6 executive heads of NSIs and included as well the Director of the UN Statistics Division, the Director-General of Eurostat, and the Director of the Statistical Directorate of the OECD. From 1992 onwards, the Director of the Statistics Department of the IMF and the Chairman of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States have also been regularly invited to participate in the Bureau meetings. In addition to this increase in the size of the Bureau, another important change that was introduced into the Bureau at the 1991 plenary session was to have the Bureau take a much more active role in improving the format and content of the annual plenary sessions. As a means of achieving this, since 1991 the Bureau has held at least two substantive two-day meetings each year focusing on issues such as reviewing plans for the implementation of the Conference's work programme, draft versions of the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work in the ECE Region and the plans for the upcoming plenary session, and preparing draft decisions to be submitted to the plenary session for approval.


*Photograph of one of the earliest meetings in a specialized field of statistics convened by the Conference of European Statisticians in the early 1950s, showing Mr. Barrie Davies (one of the first Secretaries of the Conference and the first Director of the ECE Statistical Division), and the Chairman of the meeting from the Netherlands. Unfortunately, at the time of producing the publication, the identity of the Dutch Chairman could not be ascertained. (Photograph supplied courtesy of Mr. Barrie Davies.)*

Over the course of the past 50 years there have been several hundred Presidents of National Statistical Institutes in the ECE region who have been elected by their peers to serve as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Conference. These successive Bureaus have made a very important contribution to the Conference and to international statistical work in the ECE region during this time. The complete list of persons who have been elected to serve on the CES Bureau from the earliest origins of the Conference in 1949 until 2002 is presented in the Appendix.

### *The Other Non-Elected (or Appointed) Members of the CES Bureau, 1991-2002*

As noted in the above section, at the time of the 1991 plenary session the Bureau was expanded to include representation of the heads of the statistical office of several different international organisations, and these international officials have also made a substantial contribution to the Conference during the past decade. They included the following individuals and institutions:

- Director, ECE Statistical Division
  - Siegfried Apelt (1991-1992)
  - Tom Griffin (1992-1999)
  - Paolo Garonna (1999-2001)

- Director, UN Statistics Division
  - William Seltzer (1991-92)
  - Hermann Habermann (1992-present)

- Director-General, Eurostat
  - Yves Franchet (1991-present)

- Director, Statistical Directorate of the OECD
  - Louis Kincannon (1992-2000)
  - Enrico Giovannini (2000-present)

- Director, Statistics Department, IMF
  - John McLenaghan (1991-96)
  - Carol Carson (1997-present)

- Chairman, Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States
  - Mikhail Korolev (1991-present)

### *The "King-Makers" at CES plenary Sessions over the years*

At each plenary session at which the Conference has to elect new members of the Conference to serve on its Bureau, the task of attempting to come up with a slate of nominees to propose to the Conference for approval has traditionally been entrusted to one member of the Conference, and the person to whom this task was assigned was unofficially and collegially referred to as the "King-Maker". In earlier years the responsibility was traditionally assigned to one of the most long-standing serving members of the Conference, but in 1991 when the terms of reference of the Bureau were reviewed by the Conference, the Conference formalized the process somewhat by deciding that henceforth the election by the Conference was to be made on the basis of a proposal made to the Conference by the most senior previous Chairman of the Conference who is present at the plenary session concerned. The Conference also decided in this new procedure that in the event of no previous Chairman of the Conference being present at the plenary session where new elections are being held, the outgoing Bureau would have the responsibility of designating a member of the Conference who would assume the task of preparing the proposal on the proposed composition of the new Bureau.

In recent decades, this important function has been performed by the following persons:

- P.T.I. Ohlsson (Director General of Swedish Statistical Office, for selected Bureau elections in the 1960s and 1970s);
- Tom Linehan (Director General of the Central Statistical Office of Ireland, for Bureau elections from 1982-1990);
- Hallgrimur Snorrason (Director General of Statistics Iceland, for the Bureau elections from 1991-1994);
- Carlo Malaguerra (Director of the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, for the elections from 1995-2001);

### *The Recent Years of Major Reform and Re-orientation of the Conference, 1987-1997*

Throughout its history, the Conference of European Statisticians has undergone a continual process of change, whereby it continually adapted its work programme and methods of work so as to better enable it to respond to the changing circumstances and needs of ECE Member States. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the changes that the Conference underwent in the first four decades of its existence have been chronicled elsewhere, and therefore in the interest of brevity, those earlier innovations and improvements will not be repeated here. However, in the most recent period, the 10-year period from July 1987 through June 1997 stands out as a very

important one, because it was during these years that the Conference was subjected to a major renewal and re-orientation and when significant innovations were introduced to it that served to strengthen it as an institution. The adaptations that the Conference as an institution underwent during this period were introduced by the members of the Conference to help ensure that the CES as an institution could better respond to the new and very different character and composition of the ECE Region that emerged in the early 1990s, with its 55 Member States that resulted after both the re-unification of Germany and the break-up of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

The renewal of the Conference that occurred during the 1987-1997 period was brought about largely by the Bureaus of the Conference during those years, working under the leadership of three different Chairmen. The Chairman of those Bureaus, and some of the major innovations that they and their colleagues on the Bureaus introduced to the Conference at that time, are listed below:

- Wim Begeer, Chairman of the Conference, 1988-1989

It was under the Chairmanship of Wim Begeer (Director-General of Statistics Netherlands) and the Bureau that he led that the Bureau of the Conference began to work more intensively and actively as a "Steering Committee" for the Conference, and to prepare plenary sessions that were intended to be more focused in character and more heavily concentrated on subjects of priority interest to Presidents of National Statistical Institutes. Mr. Begeer and his Bureau members also called for greater rigour to be introduced into the Conference's work programme, so that it would be more prioritised and better tailored to the actual resource base available in both the secretariat and NSIs to support it.

- Carlo Malaguerra, Chairman of the Conference, 1990-1993

It was under the Chairmanship of Carlo Malaguerra (Director of the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland) and the Bureau that he led that the process of "reforming" or "transforming" the Conference of European Statisticians that was initiated by the preceding Bureau really intensified. Some of the major milestones that characterized this CES Bureau and this period were:

- The organisation of a special one-day consultation for the Conference in February 1990 to discuss the major changes occurring in Central and Eastern Europe at that time, and their implications on the Conference and its future role in international statistical co-operation in Europe (the report of the 23 February 1990 special consultation was issued as CES/664);

- Added emphasis was placed on the necessity of developing mechanisms that would provide for a more effective and efficient division of labour among different international organisations working in the field of statistics in the European region;

- At the request of the CES Bureau, the Polish Central Statistical Office began work early in 1990 on the elaboration of a draft European statistical convention or resolution. This

groundbreaking work lasted about eighteen months and led to the adoption by the Conference at its 1991 plenary session of the "Draft Resolution on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the ECE region";

- At the request of the Bureau, the ECE and the World Bank convened in May 1990 a joint workshop on transition problems in statistical offices (the report of the 21-23 May 1990 workshop was issued as CES/649). The outcome of this workshop served as the basis for the Conference deciding at its 1990 and later plenary sessions how best it could modify its programme of work so as to respond better to the emerging needs of statistical offices in Central and East European Countries whose economies were in transition;

- At its 1991 plenary session, the Conference reviewed its "Report on Structure and Relations" (its terms of reference) that dated back to 1953 in the light of new developments and requirements in the region (the revised terms of reference were published in Annex II of the report of the 1991 plenary session, ECE/CES/38), and developed and approved a set of new procedures governing the future role and functioning of the Bureau of the Conference (the revised terms of reference of the CES Bureau were published in paragraphs 96-98 of the report of the 1991 plenary session, ECE/CES/38);

- The programme of ECE-Eurostat-OECD "Joint Programme Review" meetings was initiated, in which the three organisations began meeting annually to discuss and resolve outstanding issues of co-ordination in the statistical work that they undertook in the region;

- The Conference had available for its review at the 1993 plenary session, the first edition of the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work, that brought together in one document, at the initiative of the CES Bureau, the planned future statistical work programmes of ECE, Eurostat and the OECD (the first edition of the Integrated Presentation was issued as CES/788/Rev.1).

- Ivan Fellegi, Chairman of the Conference, 1994-1997

The innovations that were introduced by the CES Bureau and the Conference during the period from July 1989 to June 1993 were refined and consolidated and additional new ones were introduced by the CES Bureau and the Conference under the Chairmanship of Ivan Fellegi (Chief Statistician of Statistics Canada) and the Bureau that he led from 1993-1997. The following are a few of the major milestones that were introduced by the Bureau and the Conference during this period:

*Group photograph showing the participants and other attendees at the 47th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians, held in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 14-16 June 1999. (Photograph supplied courtesy of the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland.)*

- The Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work in the ECE Region was expanded to include the statistically-related work planned to be undertaken in the future by all international organisations working in the ECE region, and was also expanded and issued as a document with six separate addenda. Other important innovations and improvements were also introduced to the Integrated Presentation during this time period.

- The length of the CES plenary sessions was reduced from a duration of 5 days in 1994 to 3 full days (that covered four calendar days) in 1995 and to two-and-a half days in 1996 and later years.

- The reports of CES plenary sessions, and of meetings in specialized fields of statistics that were convened by the Conference, were shortened and made more decision-oriented.

- The practice of the Conference convening its plenary session at the OECD in Paris, at the invitation of the OECD, every second year was begun in 1994, and this practice has continued since then.

- At the request of the Conference, during this period of time the CES Bureau began taking a more active role in planning the seminar sessions that are organised within the Conference's plenary sessions each year, in order to help ensure that they would be of significant interest to Presidents of NSIs.

***The Directors of the ECE Statistical Division, 1967-2002***

In 1949 and 1951, when the Conference held its first meetings and before the Conference formally became a Principal Subsidiary Body of the ECE in 1953, core secretariat support for the work of these early meetings was provided by the UN Statistical Office in New York, and they were assisted by ECE staff working in the Statistical Section of the ECE's Research and Planning Division. After the Conference became a Principal Subsidiary Body of the ECE, the ECE secretariat gradually came to provide a larger share of this secretariat support to the Conference, but this was still with major support from the UN Statistical Office, which in 1953 seconded Mr. Barrie Davies of its staff to work in the ECE to head the secretariat staff who were charged with the responsibility of serving the Conference and its work programme.

Similarly, the ECE Statistical Division did not exist as a division when the Conference was first established, for it was created as a separate division of the ECE only in 1967. Prior to 1967, secretariat services for the Conference and for the CES work programme was provided by six or seven staff members in the Statistical Section of the ECE's Research and Planning Division working under the direction of Mr. Barrie Davies. In 1967 the ECE Executive Secretary, with the agreement of the UN Statistical Office, created the ECE Statistical Division by bringing together

the Statistical Section and the Conference secretariat, and these staff members constituted the core staff of the Statistical Division when it was created.

Since its creation in 1967 the following persons have served as Directors of the Statistical Division:

- Barrie Davies, 1967-1978
- Wolfgang Haeder, 1978-1987
- Roger Gentile (Officer-in-Charge, 15 January 1987-September 1988)
- Siegfried Apelt, September 1988-1992
- Tom Griffin, 1992-1999
- John Kelly (Officer-in-Charge, 1 July – 31 October 1999)
- Paolo Garonna, 1999-2001
- John Kelly (Officer-in-Charge, 1 September 2001-15 October 2002)
- Heinrich Bruengger, October 2002 - …

***The Secretaries of the Conference of European Statisticians, 1953-2002:***

- Hans Staehle, Chief, Statistical Section, ECE Research and Planning Division, 1949, 1951, 1953.
- Barrie Davies, 1954-1967. (Mr. Davies was originally a staff member of the UN Statistical Office in New York who in 1953 was seconded to ECE to be responsible for secretariat support to the CES within the ECE; he initially served as Secretary to the Conference, and from 1967-1978 as Director of the Statistical Division).
- Mach Jansen, 1967-1979
- Roger Gentile, 1980-1989
- Andreas Kahnert, 1990-1992
- John Kelly, 1993-2001
- Lidia Bratanova, 2002 - …

***Some of the other members of the ECE Secretariat who have served the Conference over the years:***

- Leland (Lee) Albright, 1954-1979: Mr. Albright transferred to the ECE from UN Headquarters in 1954, and worked in various fields of economic statistics and social and demographic statistics in the CES work programme over the years e.g. population and housing censuses, and international migration statistics.

- Janos Arvay, 1979-1985 and 1994-1996: Mr. Arvay served from 1979-85 as a member of the secretariat responsible for the Conference's work in the fields of national accounts,

SNA-MPS links, purchasing power parities and agricultural statistics; and from 1994-1996 as the Statistical Division's first Regional Adviser in Statistics.

- Lidia Bratanova, 1996-2002: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as national accounts, purchasing power parities, economic statistics and economies in transition.

- Jean-Etienne Chapron: the third ECE Regional Adviser in Statistics, and Project Manager of the Statistical Division's extra-budgetary projects aimed at economies in transition (2000-present)

- Laszlo Drechsler, 1970s: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as national accounts and other economic statistics including SNA-MPS links and international economic comparisons.

- Peter Hill: Specialist in national accounts, and the second ECE Regional Adviser in Statistics, 1997-1998.

- Andreas Kahnert, 1975-1996: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as energy statistics, environment statistics, Secretary of the CES, the Handbook of Official Statistics, CES work with countries in transition, and the CES "Newsletter" for technical assistance projects of international organisations working in the ECE Region.

- Jan Karlsson, 1996-2002: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as economic statistics, agricultural statistics, robotics, and manufacturing technology statistics.

- John Kelly, 1981-2002. Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as population and housing censuses, international migration statistics, gender statistics, Secretary of the Conference, and the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work in the ECE region.

- Sergei Malanitchev, 1990-1996: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as national accounts, the hidden economy and international comparisons.

- Jana Meliskova, 1987-2002: Responsible for work by the Conference in the field of Information Technology.

- Lene Mikkelsen:, 1982-2001: Responsible for work by the Conference in fields such as environment statistics, gender statistics, dissemination of statistics to the information media and social development statistics.

- Leszek Zienkowski, late 1970s: Responsible for work by the Conference in the field of economic statistics.

***Some of the other individuals (including persons other than Presidents of NSIs) who have participated actively in and contributed in important ways to the Conference over the years:***

- Odd Aukrust (Norway): (work on the development of the 1948 version of the SNA

- Reg Beale (United Kingdom) who also served as a consultant to the secretariat in the early days after the Conference was first established.

- Jean-Louis Bodin (France) contributed significantly to drawing up the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and a strong proponent of work by the CES in the Mediterranean Region, 1980s and early 1990s.

- David L. Pearce (United Kingdom): Population and housing censuses, international migration statistics, etc., 1980s to present.

- Ilie Dimitrescu(Romania): EDP, Statistical methodology, censuses, 1960s-present.

- Joseph Duncan, Chief Statistician, Office of Management and Budget (United States) in the early 1980s

- Lennart Fastbom (Sweden): FSDS, social indicators, 1980s
- Maria Helena Figueira, assistant to Yves Franchet of Eurostat from April 2000 to present, who within Eurostat and the CES Bureau helped to co-ordinate statistical work undertaken by Eurostat, OECD and the ECE secretariat.

- Mary Kay Friday, assistant to Louis Kincannon of the OECD from 1992-1994, who within the OECD and the CES Bureau helped produce the first editions of the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Programmes and to improve the nature of the product with each successive edition.

- Simon Goldberg, Director, UN Statistical Office, 1972-1979

- Hermann Habermann, Director, UN Statistics Division, 1986-2002

- Lothar Herberger (Federal Republic of Germany): population and housing censuses, labour statistics, statistical methodology, 1970s and 1980s

- Mikhail Korolev, Chairman of the Statistical Committee of the USSR in the 1980s and 1990s, and Chairman of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States from 1992 to 2002.

- Tchavdor Kyranov (Bulgaria): economic statistics, and a consultant to the ECE secretariat in the early years of the Conference, 1950s and 1960s.

- William Leonard, Director, UN Statistical Office, 1947-63

- Patrick Loftus, Deputy Director (1951-63) and Director, UN Statistical Office, 1963-1972

- Greta Mod (Hungary): Specialist in economic statistics and MPS in the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 1960s

- Janice Owens, assistant to Louis Kincannon and Enrico Giovannini of the OECD from 1994-present (2002), who within the OECD and the CES Bureau helped produce the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Programmes and to improve the nature of the product with each successive edition.

- Bela Prigly (Canada): (CES Bureau meetings from 1992-1997, and CES plenary sessions over approximately the last three decades).

- William Seltzer, Director, UN Statistical Office, 1986-1994

- Frank Whitehead (United Kingdom – survey methodology, 1980s)

- James Whitworth, of Eurostat, where he was responsible for international relations (1993-2000) and Assistant to Yves Franchet (1995-2000), and who within Eurostat helped produce the first editions of the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Programmes, to improve the nature of the IP with each successive edition, and to co-ordinate statistical work undertaken by Eurostat, OECD and the ECE secretariat.

***Some concluding comments, and a cautionary note to readers***

I have attempted in this chapter to present a short overview of some of the many hundreds of individuals who have contributed to the Conference of European Statisticians in important different ways over the course of the past 50 years. As was indicated in the introduction of the chapter, the overview is a selective one that focuses primarily on the more recent history of the Conference. Moreover, it is also selective in that it has been influenced at least in part by the experience that I have had in working with only given parts of the Conference's work programme throughout the past two decades. As a result, the accounting that I have given in this chapter should not be viewed as being a fully complete or accurate one, for despite my efforts to be as accurate and complete as

possible, it is highly likely that I have failed to mention or to give sufficient credit to many other individuals who have contributed significantly to the Conference in many different ways during the past 50 years of which I am not aware. To the extent that this has occurred, I apologise sincerely, both to the individuals concerned and to the readers for weaknesses of this type in the chapter.

### *Elected officers (Bureau) of the Conference of European Statisticians, 1949-2002*

The list of the persons who have served on the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians during the last 50 years is presented as Annex 1 at the end of this publication.

## CHAPTER 11

# The Conference of European Statisticians, Past – Present - Future[1]

### *Introduction*

Chairman, Executive Secretary, Secretary-General and colleagues.

May I say how honoured I am to be addressing this Conference and celebration, and also rather surprised! I spent so many of my earlier years in meetings of this kind for the UN, ECE and this Conference, and I didn't think that at this advanced age it would be my experience again. I congratulate you first of all on your 50th birthday. Like Mr. De Vries yesterday, I find the figure "50" a little bit irrational – as a statistician - but I interpret it as meaning 50 plus or minus 2, in which case it fits all the possible anniversaries that we might be celebrating. For me 50 is quite a limited celebration. When I was 70 some years ago, one of my friends met me and said "Claus are you really 70?" and I said rather proudly, "Yes, I am". And he said, "Surprising, you look rather older." I have never fully recovered from that. So, as I say, 50 is quite modest.

However, these last 50 years have been momentous ones for the Conference, as has been acknowledged, as a tribute to you all, by the Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General. Much has been achieved. The bridging between east and west which was dominant in my days; the establishment of the EU and now the issue of the transition countries, all vast issues and achievements of which you can be proud. All this has been reflected in your contributors in the last day or two, and will be fully covered in the historical volumes you are preparing.

My own life has been largely in statistics, studying the subject, teaching it for many years at the London School of Economics, and then, in official statistics, at the United Kingdom's Central Statistical Office as its Director from 1967 to 1978. Since then, more indirectly, statistics has still dominated my life. I have done a lot of work with various governments on educational policies, latterly especially on issues of literacy and numeracy, I have been much involved in the arts and I have been active in universities at Oxford and elsewhere. I found that once a statistician, one is always a statistician. I have looked at everything in life through statistical spectacles, both in professional work and in the way I approach political, economic and social issues of the day.

[1] This chapter represents the Keynote Address of Lord Claus Moser, Former Chairman and Bureau Member of the Conference of European Statisticians, on the occasion of the Conference's 50th plenary session (Paris, 10-12 June 2002). (See Biographical Note at the end of the publication in Annex 3.)

My address today is in three sections. First, I am going to look back briefly to my own Conference days, then I am going to ask myself and you what has been achieved since those days, and then, very tentatively, I will look to the future.

***Past***

So first of all looking back. In the years when I was responsible for the United Kingdom's Central Statistical Office, I attended this Conference annually. What has cheered me in the last 24 hours is that I am not the only survivor. I am not going to list many names but I can't resist mentioning Mr. Korolev who was a colleague, Ivan Fellegi, a friend and colleague for many years, my old friend Kathy Wallman and of course Tom Griffin who, since our CSO days, has done much to establish internationally in this Conference what we are talking about. And a more recent friend, Mr. Garonna, now influential in the higher ECE echelons. I came here thinking I wouldn't know anybody, but a number of other people have reminded me that we met at conferences back in the sixties and seventies around the world. We statisticians have always been a major travel club, and I sense from the conference papers that, if I were a conference member now, I would get to know even more parts of the world than in my days. In any case, meeting friends from earlier days makes me feel comfortable addressing you today. Statistical friendships are very precious.

The Conference in my day was very different from today. Of course we were always proud to be part of the Economic Commission which, if I may say so in the presence of the Executive Secretary, has been a vital organisation and remains so in economic thinking and policy-making throughout Europe. In the Conference we were then a smaller group. We had some very distinguished leaders. Dr. Idenburg has been mentioned already. He was preeminent, but there was also Mr. Furst from the Federal Republic of Germany, Sir Harry Campion from Britain. There was Mr Closon, and later Messrs Ripert and Malinvaud from France, and it was a great pleasure to see Mr. Malivand here yesterday. There was Stuart Rice from the States. I want to mention particularly Petter-Jakob Bjerve, today's Chairman's predecessor from Norway. He was truly a great influence, technically superb and always wise, as important an influence as anyone. And what a career! For a while he was Head of Statistics in Norway, then he became Minister of Finance, then he went back to being the top statistician, which he preferred – rightly so!

The Conference had one central purpose. We met in order to learn from each other. There was no doubt that that was the priority. International comparisons and harmonization were of course an ultimate task, and perhaps we sometimes got rather bored talking about classifications and definitions in infinite detail, yet we went on with it. But really we were there to learn from each other, to copy what was best in statistical advances in each country. So, improvements in international harmonization came second – as a by-product – to national improvements. In my view that was – and perhaps still is – the right priority.

We were dominated by economic statistics and above all by trying to build bridges between the SNA and the MPS. And I do believe that in this, and much else, we helped to link east and

west. And that was really the centre. Social statistics were still the Cinderella, and have always remained so because economic policy pressures tend to be greater than those relating to social issues. Of course, as a social statistician I have spent much of my life trying to fight that imbalance. And in the Conference, we did move gradually towards social statistics building, with emphasis on individual measures, then the "social indicator movement" emphasis on multi-purpose surveys and the first attempt at building a social statistical system. More about that in a moment.

As to our links other international organisations, I have to be frank. OECD was not as powerful then as today. There were certain fields – education, employment and general economic analyses - in which OECD was even then an important influence, and we always had a respect for it. But we didn't go out of our way to work with it. That of course has changed vastly over the years.

Eurostat, in its early days, was a cause for some tensions. This was of course prior to the European Union being as powerful as it is now. And also it has to be said honestly that in those days the technical level of Eurostat was not of top quality. Not comparable to what went on in Geneva or in Paris. And so we were perhaps slightly cool about Eurostat, feeling that its political influence exceeded the quality of its work. And I am so pleased to have learned in recent years how much that has changed, much due to Monsieur Franchet. Eurostat is bound to become ever more important.

The United Nations – now that is interesting. Of course the UN Statistical Office and the Statistical Commission - which I later came to chair - was powerful, and always hovered over us. But the UN, then as now, was dealing with over 100 countries, so that attempts at harmonization and such like were bound to be diluted when the UN bravely tried to cross bridges between highly developed and highly undeveloped statistical nations. And so, in the Conference I suspect that we treated the UN Statistical Office and Commission more with respect than with attention. That was inevitable simply because they had such a vast canvas on which to paint. I suspect the balance has changed, and that there are now more meaningful links with the UN and its Regional Commissions. Certainly that is apparent in the relation between the EEC and this Conference.

As I recall it, the Specialized Agencies we regarded as rather a nuisance. They dealt with their fields of interest – health, food, agriculture, labour, education with care and commitment, but their statisticians remained somewhat remote from the Conference, although always present at meetings. But it was all a bit distant, for we didn't think too well of their statistical work. All a long way from the Integrated Presentation, the splendid heart of your work now.

Generally, I do recall great personal pleasure in attending the annual meetings of the Conference. That was because, as I have indicated, its standing, as part of the Economic Commission for Europe, was high, because it was collegiate in its atmosphere, and above all, because high technical standards were observed. We felt we were part of a historic political change between east and west, which of course we were.

Above all, we came away from meetings having learned something from one another about our national statistical systems. So I look back to those meetings with unremited pleasure. I have only one negative feeling. In a sense we remained too inward-looking. As I recall, I was one of the few people in the meetings who kept stressing the policy side of our work. We tended to build statistical systems from within, constantly refining, standardizing, harmonizing. But the influence of policy needs – nationally or internationally – remained too remote. This is a battle I have always fought as a statistician, the desirable dominance of the user, the customer, over what we do. I suspect this still remains a problem. We statisticians are still occasionally too remote from the world of the user at all levels, macro and micro.

***Present***

Whether this remains a problem for members of the Conference, only you can judge. What I can see from the Conference papers is the vast expansion in activities since my days. On this I can be brief because your papers and speeches say it all. The transformation in European statistics since my day, some three decades ago, has been not only rapid but remarkable. In the statistical world, and in the social science world, it is surely one of the great success stories. The range of statistics coped with now is nothing short of remarkable. I tried as hard as I could to find gaps, but I don't think there are any. Everything is being covered, which is a contribution partly to the Conference, partly to Eurostat which, is committed to vast areas through being a child of the European Union, and partly to the activities of OECD. The result of all this, plus the work of other international organisations, and of the national offices themselves, means that you, nationally and internationally are now measuring almost everything that one can conceive of being measured.

So the sheer range is impressive. I cannot of course judge how good the overall quality is – the importance of which the Secretary-General of OECD rightly emphasized. I can't tell how good, overall, the figures are, but clearly the old conflicts, the payoffs between timeliness and reliability, remain. And they always will. One can't have everything, but as a user I would give top priority to improvements in timeliness. Let me give an example. I now have the opportunity occasionally to speak publicly on educational issues, in an international context. I always have to apologize for the out-of-datedness of international educational statistics. Thus, in a recent debate on higher education, I was anxious to make up-to-date comparisons with the rest of Europe and, try as I may, I couldn't get beyond 1999 for relevant comparisons. It is the old problem. We all try to produce the best statistics and so we are more inclined to focus on accuracy and reliability, whereas – since all statistics inevitably have error margins - the stress often should be on timeliness.

This raises a general point about accuracy. What is important about accuracy is not so much increasing it, but measuring it. We are still not very good at this, at estimating the accuracy of our figures. Take GNP. These crucial estimates would have even more impact on government policies, and less danger of criticism when inevitable revisions are made, if we were able to attach error margins to the figures. This remains a major challenge – could we realistically aim at developing error measurements so that all major public figures, economic and social, have probability and error

estimates attached to them? In short, the aim should be to produce figures as up-to-date as possible, whenever possible with error margins.

Otherwise I can see only progress since my day. I am envious of the degree of coverage, and above all full of admiration for the Integrated Presentation you have achieved – surely one of the most important inventions in international statistics, and therefore in policy backup. I am equally full of admiration for the Fundamental Principles to which you are working – though I would like more presence even in these for the user's side.

One more query. Am I wrong to be worried about the sheer amount you are now covering in your programmes? Is it realistic to expect everyone to cope with it? I know that in my day what is now required from national offices would have been beyond our resources. We could not have coped with such vast international demands. But maybe things are better now. I have great confidence for our own Office for National Statistics under Len Cook's leadership. It is vastly better in efficiency, output and reliability than in my day. No doubt similar praise would apply in all your countries, and my worry relates to this burden on small countries and offices – even in the number of meetings to be attended around the world.

Before I go to my final remarks, there is one unfinished business from my Conference years. At least I believe it is unfinished. I refer to the attempts to build a System of Social and Demographic Statistics, which came to be abbreviated as the SSDS. This is forever linked with the name of Sir Richard Stone, sadly no longer with us, one of the great statisticians and economists of our time. I had the honour and excitement of working with Dick Stone on this project, so I speak with some inside knowledge. The project started in the late sixties, and it was nothing less than to try to do for social measurements what the national accounts do for the economy. Now Dick Stone was of course under no illusion that this could be done in the same way as in the national accounts. These, after all, are bound together by monetary measurement, which is less easily applicable to social measures, and also, because behind the national accounts lies the theoretical basis of Keynes and others. In other words they are based on a theoretical framework. Even so, Stone took the view that since in real life, social issues are related to one another – health to housing, employment to education, crime to education and so forth – it should be possible to link them together in a set of analyses. Not in one table, any more than in the national accounts, but in sets of integrated analyses. It may never be as comprehensive as the national accounts are, but even so fairly extensive and illuminating. Stone started with linking employment and education, and with these we got a long way in filling the cells with data. The main source was in longitudinal surveys, always the most useful for building statistical systems. In this, incidentally, Britain is lucky in that we have three major longitudinal surveys started at different times, and illustrating progress of individuals through time.

And so Dick Stone took these longitudinal surveys, linked with cross-sectional surveys, and built the analyses of employment and education. That was relatively easy. He then created sets of blank tables, linking other social and economic aspects of life. I can still see the blank tables awaiting real-life data, which is the way he, Meade and Keynes many years before had built the

national accounts. He was going to fill the empty cells from whatever sources he could find, steadily refining the data. They wouldn't all have the same binding measures – such as money – which is why he called it systems of social and demographic statistics. He was well advanced with this exciting statistical development, and then sadly, he died. But it is relevant to note that the Nobel Prize awarded to him referred to this particular work as one of the reasons for this great honour.

It was widely realized that in this system-building lay the possibility of not only improving social measurements but improving the basis of social policies and their links to economic policies. Ultimately the two vast systems – SSDS and the National Accounts – could have many links. I hope that the Conference, with OECD and Eurostat and National Offices, might interest themselves in this major research task.

***Future***

So now, conscious of the time, I want to say a word, very tentatively, about the future of the Conference. I will not mention particular subjects. I have already indicated that, if anything, you must be overburdened by the number of topics you cover, so the last thing I would want to do is to suggest gaps for yet more refinements. Instead, I will talk about some underlying challenges.

First, I take for granted that the Conference, encouraged by what we have heard from the Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General, will go on doing its present job as well as now. It will continue to refine statistics for the purposes both speakers have stressed. That is your bread and butter. In particular I also take for granted that the links with Eurostat, which, because of the increasing importance of Europe as an entity, will flourish, and that you will find organisational ways to help those links to be positive, as also with OECD.

Above all, I assume that the Integrated Presentation, a superb advance, will retain its importance.

More generally, I trust that globalization will, so to speak, become your middle name. Europe, however great and vital, is only part of the world. Many others suffer unacceptably poor conditions. It is unthinkable that statisticians in Europe will not be increasingly concerned with Africa, Asia and Latin America almost as much as they are with Europe. So I hope that the Conference's future will encompass much more of its global context.

And of course I take for granted that technology, and the advances it can offer to collecting, analyzing and communicating statistics, will be at the forefront of your discussions, even more than now.

*Public Trust*

So to my general points. Number one is public trust and interest. Of course countries differ, and it may be that in Britain we suffer more than most from lack of public trust, partly because of our aggressive press. But happily this is getting better because our Prime Minister has put his weight behind national statistics, behind the National Statistician and his independence, and behind the Office for National Statistics' independence. So hopefully the problems may become less than in my day. Then I had to worry about ministerial intervention, and if I had time I could tell you of two occasions when I offered my formal resignation to the government of the day, because of attempts at interference. After considerable pressures and discussions, on both occasions my resignation was not accepted and the interference withdrawn. I hope those kinds of danger are over. It is now a much better situation, and relationships with government are incorporated in codes of practice, aimed to ensure integrity and independence. Len Cook has developed such a code for British statistics, and this will cover all the necessary safeguards.

*Statistical Commissions*

In this context, Statistical Commissions are of enormous importance. Such bodies exist in many countries, and help to cement public trust in official statistics. Their functions and mode of operation vary, and I hope that gradually the new Statistical Commission in Britain will mirror its operation along the lines of the Canadian Statistical Commission, which I regard as the model. What I mean by this is that the Commission should do all in its power to back up the nation's statistical office and its Head; should focus on its own advisory role; should of course monitor national statistics, investigate problems and inadequacies when they arise; but also be willing to criticize public uses of statistics, whether by politicians or the media, when they are ill-based and liable to undermine trust. A constructive, and highly respected, partnership between a Commission and the Statistical Service is invaluable in creating and sustaining trust. The Conference could be helpful in studying different formats, and in making recommendations.

*Government decision-making*

There are various reasons why even in countries where trust is healthy, we may be entering more difficult times. First, the fact that government decision-making is getting more sophisticated, sensitive and transparent may make our lives more difficult. It implies more dependence on good statistics, plus more irritation when there are statistical inaccuracies, delays or revisions. And it is not just that policy-making is getting more sophisticated – although this is a fact. It is also that the very improvement in statistical theory, practice and available "tools" has raised expectations. We – statisticians – are expected to be able to measure everything, speedily and accurately. Revisions, even in massively complex operations like the national accounts, are regarded as indicating failure and mistakes. Ministers are ever more intolerant, perhaps even unaware of how good their

statistical back-up is. Have we, collectively, failed to educate the policy world about the nature of our calculations and our estimates? Can the Conference help in this task?

*Public issues*

There are other trends undermining confidence in figures. First we are more than ever bombarded by statistics far removed from the conventional official figures with which this Conference is normally concerned. I refer to the figures that come our way as part and parcel of controversial and usually sensitive issues of the day. Let me recall current debates – common to many countries – on mad cow disease; on hospital waiting lists; on levels of illiteracy and numeracy; on migration and asylum seekers; on foot and mouth disease and so forth.

What such issues have in common is that they are complex; that they relate to uncertainties and risks for individuals and corporations; and above all that they are publicly argued between experts presenting conflicting statistics. We live in a world of "evidence-based" policy making, which is desirable. But the very fact that often the evidence, generally in statistical terms, is conflicting if anything threatens public trust in our science.

*Management statistics*

There is yet another trend which does not help. We live in a world dominated by management techniques. Everything, every institution is beset by measuring targets, efficiency performance, objectives, aims, mission statements and so forth. In themselves, these are good disciplines, and it is certainly not my purpose to argue against them. My concern is the effect on statistics. In earlier days, institutions and companies might have viewed most statistical requests without worry. But when these requests are part of management assessment and control, willingness to respond may well be, to put it mildly, less sympathetic. Statistics seem to be sought less for information than for power and authority.

These are some examples of current trends which may undermine public attitudes to statistics, however good the statistical office and its work. For that reason alone they should concern us, and indeed deserve our attention internationally. This is the more important because of increasing public concern in this day of technical advance, about confidentiality of information.

*Education*

You may wonder what all this has to do with the role of the Conference. In my view a great deal. As official statisticians we need all the public support and interest we can get, and so the trends I have mentioned – though in a sense removed from official statistics - deserve our concern. What I have in mind in particular is our educational task, and I am glad that the Secretary-General

referred to this in his opening remarks. I do believe that we should all do more in educating children, adults of all kinds and especially politicians and the media, into a better understanding of statistics. This is partly self interest, for we need support from all our publics if what we produce from our statistical systems is to be put to good purpose.

*Users*

On dissemination generally, much progress has indeed been made throughout the statistical world in publications and other forms of communication, notably the Internet. The Office of National Statistics in Britain, which I obviously know best, produces a range of publications in greatly more attractive and accessible forms than in my day. I believe the same is true worldwide.

I cannot stress enough the importance of user links. I would like to think that they are always in your thoughts as you plan a project or priority, or agree on yet further refinements in particular series. So how close are the links?

My instinct – as I have indicated earlier – is that the user world does not yet figure as prominently in the Conference's programmes as it should. Of course, at one level your work is governed by the ultimate international user, ECE, but this is less "micro-specific" than I have in mind. I would argue that in every single project or task force, key users need to be involved nationally and internationally. Involvement means being present at meetings, commenting on all plans before they are finalized, with the users always having a dominant voice. In short, a full partnership between users and creators of statistics.

At government level, this has to be achieved without diluting the independence of the statistical office and its leader. Yet the users' voice – whether by officials or politicians – needs to be heard and respected, with statistical independence always guarded. These relationships can be enshrined in legislation or in the sort of Code I have mentioned.

User links are crucial at micro level, in relation to every part of business and industry, schools, hospitals, environmental agencies, indeed wherever statistics are needed.

*Academic links*

There is another kind of link I wish to mention – namely with the academic and scientific world of statistics. I have often worried about the division, so evident in journals and general practice, between theoretical and applied statistics, between the official and academic world. Obviously there are gaps. But, looked at from our point of view, the links are crucial. Glancing through your programmes, it is obvious how much theoretical statistics has to contribute, whether on sampling, time series analysis, error and probability estimation, indeed analytical techniques generally. I may quote Sir John Kingman, now Chairman of Britain's Statistical Commission, who

said some years ago: “responsible statistical practice requires the support of a strong theoretical infrastructure”. The key question here though is: “Can the Conference do even more in this direction?”

Perhaps a particular emphasis could be on policy evaluation. We are living in a world dominated by thinking about risks, probabilities and policy evaluation. Our Government makes it a rule that any new programme requiring money has to be built onto an evaluation programme. This is not just to ensure that targets, and achieving targets, is built into the programme. It is more sophisticated in the sense that random experiments, random allocations, matching techniques can be built into the programme. This is part of central policy making, a new dependence on statistical techniques, and is therefore of clear interest to the Conference.

*Numeracy*

I wish to end with a most basic point, indeed the bedrock of attitudes to statistics. I refer to the fact that in many of the countries present at the Conference a substantial minority of grown-ups are unable to deal with figures at all. These negative experiences have their roots in early school years, and don’t relate just to mathematics but to use of numbers generally. Three years ago I produced a report on adult literacy and numeracy, which was instigated by the Government. The methodology followed from OECD studies. It showed that in England some one in five adults – 7 million – had poor functional literacy and numeracy. Much of Europe was not much better. The relevance to all I have talked about is obvious. With millions of children leaving school with extreme difficulty in dealing with numbers, and growing into adults with continuing problems, it is less surprising that so many people are uncomfortable with statistics.

Primary action in this field lies in our educational systems, and it is good to see international interest in OECD and UNESCO. I have chosen to mention it as a concluding warning that all of us, whether engaged internationally or nationally, ought to encourage policies that will make every child and adult comfortable with ordinary numbers and therefore with statistics. It is a central and vast challenge.

## *Concluding Remarks*

I conclude by congratulating you again on what the Conference has achieved. When I come back in another 50 years time – which, being a natural optimist - is of course my intention, I hope to see that you have continued your refinements of statistics both nationally and internationally, that the Integrated Presentation lives, and that in addition you will have made progress in educating our user publics and linking with them in every possible way.

So in short I hope that statistical systems will get even better, but that in addition you will have strengthened all links with the policy world. The time when statisticians saw their place as in

the back room are over. Our greatest contribution is not just to produce massive data, but to help those who have policy responsibilities in their use and understanding. It is my belief that this closeness at all levels can be achieved without sacrificing the neutrality and independence of our work which remains crucial. The future lies in improving analysis and interpretation, in fact in using statistics.

So that is my hope for the Conference of European Statisticians 50 years hence.

**ANNEX 1**

# Elected officers (Bureau) of the Conference of European Statisticians, 1949-2002

**Explanatory note:** After the end of the Second World War the Conference of European Statisticians first met on two occasions, in March of 1949 and in September of 1951. It did not meet in these first two meetings as a Principal Subsidiary Body of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), but as an Ad Hoc Regional Meeting of European Statisticians that was convened under the joint auspices of the ECE and the United Nations Statistical Commission. It was only at the third Ad Hoc Regional Meeting of European Statisticians that took place in June of 1953 that the decisions were formally taken to convert the Conference into a "Principal Subsidiary Body of the ECE", and to convert the 1953 meeting and all future annual meetings into "plenary sessions" of the Conference.

| | | Report of the meeting |
|---|---|---|
| First Regional Meeting of European Statisticians | | E/CN.3/Conf.1/3 |
| (Geneva, 14-18 March 1949) | | E/ECE/STAT/3 |
| Chairman: | Mr. Idenburg (Netherlands) | |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr. Fajfr (Czechoslovakia) | |
| Second Regional Meeting of European Statisticians | | E/CN.3/Conf.2/1 |
| (Geneva, 17-21 September 1951) | | E/ECE/135 |
| Chairman: | Mr. R.C. Geary (Ireland) | |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr. Dufresne (Belgium) | |

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| 1st Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians | | E/ECE/167; |
| (Geneva. 15-19 June 1953) | | E.CN.3/Conf.3/1 |
| Chairman: | Mr. Closon (France) | |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr. Campion (United Kingdom) | |

2nd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 14-19 June 1954) — Conf.Eur.Stats/19

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| Chairman: | Dr. Idenburg (Netherlands) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. Campion (United Kingdom),<br>Mr. Closon (France) |

3rd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 26 September-1 October 1955) — Conf.Eur.Stats/37

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| Chairman: | Dr. Idenburg (Netherlands) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. Campion (United Kingdom),<br>Mr. Closon (France) |

4th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 25-30 June 1956) — Conf.Eur.Stats/61

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| Chairman: | Mr. Campion (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway)<br>Mr. F.L. Closon (France),<br>Dr. F. Fajfr (Czechoslovakia) |

5th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 17-21 June 1957) — Conf.Eur.Stats/80

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| Chairman: | Mr. Campion (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway),<br>Mr. F.L. Closon (France),<br>Dr. F. Fajfr (Czechoslovakia) |

6th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 2-6 June 1958) — Conf.Eur.Stats/94

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| Chairman: | Mr. F.L. Closon (France) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy),<br>Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway),<br>Dr. F. Fajfr (Czechoslovakia) |

7th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 8-12 June 1959) — Conf.Eur.Stats/112

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| Chairman: | Mr. F.L. Closon (France) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy),<br>Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway),<br>Dr. F. Fajfr (Czechoslovakia) |

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| 8th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 26-30 September 1960) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/132 |
| Chairman: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Novak (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. I. Ohlsson (Sweden) | |
| 9th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva. 10-14 July 1961) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/152 |
| Chairman: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Novak (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. I. Ohlsson (Sweden) | |
| 10th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 15-19 October 1962) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/174 |
| Chairman: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Novak (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. I. Ohlsson (Sweden),<br>Mr. G. Péter (Hungary) | |
| 11th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 17-21 June 1963) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/197 |
| Chairman: | Professor B. Barberi (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | M.D. McCarthy (Ireland),<br>Mr. S. Stanev (Bulgaria) | |
| 12th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 19-23 October 1964) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/221 |
| Chairman: | Mr. P.T.I. Ohlsson (Sweden) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr.D. McCarthy (Ireland),<br>Mr. S. Stanev (Bulgaria)<br>Mr. G. Péter (Hungary) | |
| 13th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 18-22 October 1965) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/230 |
| Chairman: | Mr. P.T.I. Ohlsson (Sweden) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. G. Peter (Hungary),<br>Mr. M.D. McCarthy (Ireland),<br>Mr. S. Stanev (Bulgaria) | |

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| 14th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 3-7 October 1966) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/246 |
| Chairman: | Mr. S. Stanev (Bulgaria) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. G. Peter (Hungary),<br>Mr. M.D. McCarthy (Ireland),<br>Mr. P. Couvelis (Greece) | |
| 15th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 19-23 June 1967) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/253 |
| Chairman: | Mr. S. Stanev (Bulgaria) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. G. Peter (Hungary),<br>Mr. P. Couvelis (Greece) | |
| 16th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 17-21 June 1968) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/269 |
| Chairman: | Mr. P. Couvelis (Greece) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Dufrasne (Belgium)<br>Mr. J. Kazimour (Czechoslovakia),<br>Mr. G. Peter (Hungary) | |
| 17th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 23-2 7 June 1969) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/283 |
| Chairman: | Mr. A. Dufresne (Belgium) | |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr. J. Kazimour (Czechoslovakia) | |
| 18th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, I5-19 June 1970) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/295 |
| Chairman: | Mr. J. Kazimour (Czechoslovakia) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway),<br>Mr. W. Kawalec (Poland),<br>Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom) | |
| 19th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva. 14-18 June 1971) | | Conf.Eur.Stats/309 |
| Chairman: | Mr. J. Kazimour (Czechoslovakia) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway),<br>Mr. W. Kawalec (Poland),<br>Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom) | |

20th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians Conf.Eur.Stats/321
(Geneva, 26-30 June 1972)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia),<br>Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom),<br>Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |

21st Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/2
(Geneva, 25-29 June 1973)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. P.J. Bjerve (Norway) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia)m<br>Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom),<br>Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |

22nd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/4
(Geneva, 24-28 June 1974)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. J. Ripert (France),<br>Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |

23rd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/6
(Geneva, 23-27 June 1975)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |

24th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/8
(Geneva, 28 June-2 July 1976)

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| Chairman: | Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. L. Bosse (Austria),<br>Mr. I. Latifïc (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland) |

25th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/10
(Geneva, 27 June-1 July 1977)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. D. Tchervanev (Byelorussian SSR) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. L. Bosse (Austria),<br>Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia),<br>Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland) |

26th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/12
(Geneva, 26-20 June 1978)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia), |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. J. Balint (Hungary), |
| | Mr. L. Bosse (Austria), |
| | Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland) |

27th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/14
(Geneva. 25-29 June 1979)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Latific (Yugoslavia) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. L. Bosse (Austria), |
| | Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland) |

28th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/16
(Geneva, 23-27 June 1980)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland ) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Mr. C. Kelperis (Greece), |
| | Mr. I. Salapa (Romania) |

29th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians EC E/CES/18
(Geneva, 22-26 June 1981)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. T.P. Linehan (Ireland ) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Mr. C. Kelperis (Greece), |
| | Mr. I. Salapa (Romania) |

30th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/20
(Geneva, 21-25 June 1982)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Salapa (Romania) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Mr. L. Nilsson (Sweden) |

31st Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/22
(Geneva, 13-17 June 1983)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Salapa (Romania) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Sir John Boreham (United Kingdom) |

32nd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/21
(Geneva, 18-22 June 1984)

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|---|---|
| Chairman: | Sir John Boreham (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands), |
| | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Mrs. V. Nyitrai (Hungary) |

33rd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/26
(Geneva, 17-21 June 1985)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Sir John Boreham (United Kingdom) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands), |
| | Mr. A. Donda (GDR), |
| | Mrs. V. Nyitrai (Hungary) |

34th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/28
(Geneva, 16-20 June 1986)

Alternating Acting Chairman: Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands)
(replacing Mr. A. Donda, who was ill):

| | |
|---|---|
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mrs. V. Nyitrai (Hungary), |
| | Mr. I. Pinto (Italy) |

35th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/30
(Geneva, 15-19 June 1987)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. A. Donda (German Democratic Republic) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands), |
| | Mrs. V. Nyitrai (Hungary), |
| | Mr. L. Pinto (Italy) |

36th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/32
(Geneva, 13-17 June 1988)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland), |
| | Ms. V. Nyitrai (Hungary), |
| | Mr. W. Sadowski (Poland) |

37th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/34
(Geneva, 12-16 June 1989)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. W. Begeer (Netherlands) |
| Vice-Chairman: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland) |

38th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/36
(Geneva, 11-15 June 1990)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. S. Tassev (Bulgaria), |
| | Mr. S. Johansson (Sweden), |
| | Mr. N. Borisenko (Ukrainian SSR) |

39th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/38
(Geneva, 17-21 June 1991)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. S. Tassev (Bulgaria), |
| | Mr. E. Hölder (Germany), |
| | Mr. S. Johansson (Sweden), |
| | Mr. N. Borisenko (Ukrainian SSR) |

40th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/40
(Geneva, 15-19 June 1992)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada), |
| | Mr. G. Vukovich (Hungary), |
| | Mr. M.J. Vilares (Portugal), |
| | Mr. S. Johansson (Sweden) |

41st Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/43
(Geneva, 14-18 June 1993)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. C. Malaguerra (Switzerland) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada), |
| | Mr. H.E. Zeuthen (Denmark), |
| | Mr. G. Vukovich (Hungarv), |
| | Mr. P. Guzhvin (Russian Federation), |
| | Mr. O. Güvenen (Turkey) |

42nd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/45
(Paris. 13-17 June 1994)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. H.E. Zeuthen (Denmark), |
| | Mr. G. Vukovich (Hungary), |
| | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy), |
| | Mr. J. Olénski (Poland), |
| | Mr. O. Güvenen (Turkey) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 43rd Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 12-15 June 1995) | | ECE/CES/48 |
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy),<br>Mr. J. Olénski (Poland) | |
| 44th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Paris, 11-13 June 1996) | | ECE/CES/50 |
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy),<br>Mr. S. Longva (Norway),<br>Mr. D. Murphy (Ireland) | |
| 45th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, 10-12 June 1997) | | ECE/CES/52 |
| Chairman: | Mr. I. Fellegi (Canada) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy),<br>Mr. S. Longva (Norway),<br>Mr. D. Murphy (Ireland),<br>Mr. E. Outrata (Czech Republic) | |
| 46th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Paris, France, 18-20 May 1998) | | ECE/CES/54 |
| Chairman: | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Abrahamse (Netherlands),<br>Mr. S. Longva (Norway),<br>Mr. D. Murphy (Ireland),<br>Mr. E. Outrata (Czech Republic),<br>Mr. R. Veetousme (Estonia) | |
| 47th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 14-16 June 1999) | | ECE/CES/56 |
| Chairman: | Mr. P. Garonna (Italy) | |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. A. Abrahamse (Netherlands),<br>Mr. S. Longva (Norway),<br>Mr. D. Murphy (Ireland),<br>Mr. E. Outrata (Czech Republic),<br>Mr. R. Veetousme (Estonia) | |

48th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/58
(Paris, France. 13 15 June 2000)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. Svein Longva (Norway ) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Ms. P. Martín-Guzmán (Spain), |
| | Mr. D. Murphy (Ireland), |
| | Mr. T. Toczynski (Poland), |
| | Mr. H. Snorrason (Iceland) |

49th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/60
(Geneva, Switzerland, 11-13 June 2001)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman: | Mr. Svein Longva (Norway) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. Len Cook (United Kingdom), |
| | Mr. Hallgrímur Snorrason (Iceland), |
| | Mr. Tadeusz Toczynski (Poland), |
| | Mr. Rein Veetousme (Estonia) |

50th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians ECE/CES/62
(Paris, France, 10-12 June 2002)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairman : | Mr. Svein Longva (Norway) |
| Vice-Chairmen: | Mr. Len Cook (United Kingdom), |
| | Mr. Hallgrímur Snorrason (Iceland), |
| | Mr. Vladimir Sokolin (Russian Federation), |
| | Mr. Tadeusz Toczynski (Poland), |
| | Ms. Katherine Wallman (Unites States of America) |

**ANNEX 2**

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ACC-SCSA | UN Administrative Committee on Coordination Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities |
| AFRISTAT | Observatoire Economique et Statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne |
| AIS | Association des Administrateurs de l'INSEE |
| ASA | American Statistical Association |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| BIS | Bank for International Settelements |
| CAPI | Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing |
| CATI | Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing |
| CBNE | Classification by Branches of National Economy, developed by the CMEA |
| CEE | Central and eastern European (countries) |
| CES | Conference of European Statisticians |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CMEA | Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (also referred to as Comecon) |
| CORSTAT | Conférence Suisse des Offices Régionaux de Statistique |
| CPE | Centrally Planned Economy |
| CPI | Consumer Price Index |
| DGINS | Directeurs-Généraux des Instituts Nationales de la Statistique (Directors General of National Statistical Institutes) |

| | |
|---|---|
| EAEC | European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) |
| ECA | UN Economic Commission for Africa |
| ECE | UN Economic Commission for Europe |
| ECLAC | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| ECOSOC | UN Economic and Social Council |
| ECP | European Comparison Programme |
| ECSC | European Coal and Steel Community |
| EDP | Electronic Data Processing |
| EEA | European Economic Area |
| EEC | European Economic Community |
| EFTA | European Free Trade Association |
| ESA | European System of Integrated Economic Accounts |
| ESCAP | UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| ESCWA | UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia |
| ESS | European Statistical System |
| EU | European Union |
| Eurostat | Statistical Office of the European Communities (see SOEC) |
| FAO | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FSDS | Framework for Social and Demographic Statistics |
| GATT | General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade |
| GDDS | General Data Dissemination Standards (of the IMF) |

| | |
|---|---|
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| GNP | Gross National Product |
| GSS | UK Government Statistical Service |
| IAOS | International Association for Official Statistics |
| ICAO | International Civil Aviation Organisation |
| ICLS | International Conference of Labour Statisticians |
| ICP | UN International Comparison Project |
| IIS | International Institute of Statistics (see ISI) |
| ILO | International Labour Office |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INSEE | Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) |
| IP | Integrated Presentation (of international statistical work in the ECE region) |
| IPU | (see UPU) |
| ISAI | Inter-American Statistical Institute |
| ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education |
| ISCO | International Standard Classification of Occupations |
| ISI | International Statistical Institute (see IIS) |
| ISIC | International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities |
| IT | Information Technology |
| ITU | International Telecommunications Union |

| | |
|---|---|
| JPR | (ECE-Eurostat-OECD) Joint Programme Review |
| ME | Market Economy |
| MERCOSUR | Southern Common Market (between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay |
| MPS | Material Product System |
| NACE | The European Commission's General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities [Nomenclature générale des activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes] |
| NAFTA | North American Free Trade Agreement |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NIMEXE | Nomenclature of Goods for the External Trade Statistics of the European Community and for Statistics of Trade EU between Member States |
| NPS | Net Material Product |
| NSI | National Statistical Institute |
| NSO | National Statistical Office |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OEEC | Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (precursor organisation to the OECD) |
| OFS | Office federal de la Statistique (Suisse) |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom |
| PARIS21 | Partnership In Statistics for Development in the 21st Century |
| PHARE | The European Commission's Action plan for coordinated aid for restructuring the economies in Poland and Hungary [Pologne-Hongrie Assistance à la Restructuration des Economies] |
| PPP | Purchasing Power Parity |
| RMES | Regional Meeting of European Statisticians |

| | |
|---|---|
| SCP | Statistical Computing Project |
| SDDS | Special Data Dissemination Standards (of the IMF) |
| SEC | Securities and Exchange Commission |
| SFdS | Société Française de Statistique |
| SFTC | Standard Foreign Trade Classification (of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) |
| SINS | System of Indicators of Non-material Services |
| SITC | Standard International Trade Classification (of the United Nations) |
| SNA | System of National Accounts |
| SOEC | Statistical Office of the European Communities (see Eurostat) |
| SPC | Statistical Programme Committee |
| SSDS | System of Social and Demographic Statistics |
| TACIS | The European Commission's Technical Assistance programme for 13 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) that is primarily aimed at enhancing the transition process in these countries. |
| TES | Training European Statisticians |
| UEMOA | Economic and Monetary Union of West African Countries [Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest Africaine] |
| UNCHS | United Nations Centre for Human Settlements |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNECE | United Nations Economic Commission for Europe |

| | |
|---|---|
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organisation |
| UNSC | United Nations Statistical Commission |
| UNSD | United Nations Statistics Division |
| UPU | Universal Postal Union |
| WGISPC | Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WIPO | World Intellectual Property Organisation |
| WTO | World Trade Organisation |

## ANNEX 3

# Biographical Notes of the Authors

**Carlo Malaguerra** was Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office from 1987 to 2002. He was also Chairman of the Conference of European Statisticians from 1989 to 1992, a period of profound changes in the region and of renewal of official statistics. He is a member of the ISI and of the IAOS. He has organised numerous international conferences, amongst them the Congress on Statistics and Human Rights that was held in Montreux, Switzerland in 2000. He is a member of the Committee of the Swiss Academy for Humanities.

**Tom Griffin** is a statistical consultant. He was Director of the Statistical Division of the UN Economic Commission for Europe from 1992 to 1999, during the period when the membership of the ECE and the Conference of European Statisticians grew so much. It was also the period of many reforms in the Conference. Before becoming Director of the UNECE Statistical Division, he represented the United Kingdom in many meetings of the Conference during the 1980s and early 1990s. He is a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, and a member of the International Statistical Institute.

**Willem de Vries** is Acting Director of the UN Statistics Division. This article represents the author's personal views. The author thanks Ivan Fellegi, Hermann Habermann and Carlo Malaguerra for their comments on an earlier draft, and John Kelly for providing him with some interesting background documents. Anna Huttmann (UN Statistics Division, New York) deserves credit for collecting much of the necessary documentation.

**Mikhail Korolev**, Chairman of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, was born on 12 September 1931. He received his education from the Moscow Plekhanov Institute of the National Economy. Some of the posts he has held are: Assistant Dean and Department Head, 1956-66, Rector, 1966-72, Professor, 1967; at the Moscow Institute of Economics and Statistics, Deputy and First Deputy Director, 1972-85, Director, 1985-87, Central Statistics Board of the USSR; Vice-Chair, 1976-79,1989-91,and Chair of the UN Statistical Commission, 1979-81; President, USSR State Committee on Statistics, 1987-89; Adviser to Prime Minister of USSR, 1991; Chairman, Interstate Statistical Committee of CIS,1991- present. .Honours: PhD in Economics, Professor, Honorary Scientist, and Member, International Informatics Academy. Member of the International Statistical Institute.

**Youri Ivanov**, Deputy Chairman of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, supervises the work of the departments of economic and social statistics; staff member of the UN statistical office, 1966-71 and 1979-85; the member of International Association

for Research in Income and Wealth; the member of International Statistical Institute; professor of Moscow State University, PhD on Economics.

**Jean-Louis Bodin** (France), Inspecteur Général de l'INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques); President (1999–2001) of the International Statistical Institute (ISI)
President (1989–1991) of the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS)
Actual position: Senior Adviser to the President of the Public Interest Grouping "Assistance to the Development of Exchanges in Economic and Financial Technologies" (since 2000)
Some former positions: Director of the Liaison Bureau between Eurostat and the European Parliament (1997–2000); and Director of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation at INSEE (1989–1997).

**Jozef Olenski** is professor of the Warsaw University and the Adviser to the President of the National Bank of Poland. In 1975 - 1991 he was the director of the Research Institute of Statistics of the CSO Poland, in 1992 - 1995 - the President of the CSO. He was also the chairman of the UN Statistical Commission and the member of the Board of the Conference of European Statisticians. Member of ISI and the Irving Fisher Committee.

**Vladimir L. Sokolin** has been Chairman of the Goskomstat of Russia since 1998. From 1972-1991, while being in the Central Statistical Office of the USSR and then in the Goskomstat of the USSR, he worked in the field of macroeconomic statistics. From 1991-1993 he was Deputy Director of the Center for Economic Analysis under the Government of the Russian Federation and headed the compilation of quantitative estimates for analysis and forecasting. From 1993-1998, he was Vice Chairman of the Goskomstat of Russia and headed the development of the System of National Accounts in Russia. Since 1991, he has participated in developing governmental programs for reforming the Russian economy. He is a member of the International Statistical Institute and a Vice-Chairman of the Conference of European Statisticians.

**James Whitworth** (Eurostat, Statistical Office of the European Community) is currently Adviser for Institutional Relations in Brussels, liaising between Eurostat's services in Luxembourg and the other European Institutions, such as the Council and the European Parliament, that are based in Brussels. After graduating in statistics at University College, London and having completed a Master's Degree in Computer Science at the same institution, he joined the UK Statistical Service at the Department of Trade and Industry in London in 1980. There, he was involved in the production of statistics on tourism and retail trade before becoming responsible for the Industrial Economic Indicators database. In 1987 he joined the European Commission and moved to Eurostat in Luxembourg where he worked on price statistics and then national accounts. In 1991 he joined Eurostat's programming unit where he was responsible for International Relations and the statistical part of the European Economic Area agreement. In 1995 he became Assistant to the Director General, Yves Franchet, retaining responsibility for International Relations, and also working on political relations with the Commissioner responsible for Statistics and becoming secretary of the Management Committee. He attended Bureau meetings and Plenary sessions of the Conference of European Statisticians between 1992 and 2000. The views expressed herein are purely those of the

writer and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission. The author wishes to acknowledge Alberto de Michelis and Tom Griffin, whose recollections about certain events were rather more accurate than his own.

**Paolo Garonna** is Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. He is also full professor of Applied Economics on leave from the Faculty of Statistics of the University of Padua in Italy. In the 1990s, Mr. Garonna was Director-General of the National Statistical Institute of Italy (ISTAT). Before then, he worked at the OECD in Paris as Director for Employment Education and Social Affairs. He joined the United Nations in 1999 as Director of the Statistical Division of the ECE. In August 2001 he was appointed Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNECE, and from November 2001 to March 2002 he was Acting Executive Secretary of the same organisation. Author of many books and articles on official statistics, economic policy, labour, science and technology, Mr. Garonna was economic advisor to many Governments, social partners, civil society and international organisations. The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNECE.

**John Kelly** worked in the ECE Statistical Division from 1981 to 2003, and was responsible for the Conference's work in social and demographic statistics throughout that period. He also served as the Secretary of the Conference and as Deputy Director of the Division from 1992 to 2002, and as the Acting Director of the Division both in 1999 and from September 2001 to October 2002. The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the ECE.

**Claus Moser** is Chairman of the British Museum Development Trust. From 1967 to 1978 he was Director of the Central Statistical Office in London. He then joined N M Rothschild & Sons as Vice Chairman. He was a non-executive Director of TheEconomist until 1993. Much of his professional life has been in the academic world. From 1961 to 1970 he was Professor of Social Statistics at the London School of Economics, where he had taken his degree in 1943. Education policy has always been a major involvement. Lord Moser has long been an active pianist, and has held many posts in music including the Chairmanship of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, from 1974 to 1987. He was created a Peer in 2001, and he has received decorations from the French and German Governments and Honorary Doctorates from many universities.