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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint ECE/ILO Meeting on Consumer Price Indices
(Geneva, 3-5 November 1999)

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. The joint ECE/ILO Meeting on Consumer Price Indices was held in Geneva from 3-5 November 1999. It was attended by Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States of America. Representatives of the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat) attended. Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Japan, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Tunisia were present under article 11 of the terms of reference of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund and a representative of AFRISTAT also attended.

2. The provisional agenda was adopted.

3. Mr. D. Fenwick (United Kingdom) was elected Chairman and Mr. J. Greenlees (United States of America) was elected Vice-Chairman.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting on the basis of invited papers and conference room papers:

(a) Information items

- (b) Nature of indices (general versus specific indices; cost of living index versus pure price index, etc.)
- (c) Sampling and data collection
- (d) Issues of practical index work
- (e) Quality management

5. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (IWGPS) and the Technical Expert Group on Consumer Price Indices (TEG-CPI) held their meetings on 2 November 1999 and the Technical Expert Group on Producer Price Indices (TEG-PPI) held its meeting on 2 and 3 November 1999. During the afternoon of 2 November 1999, a special session for countries in transition was organised by the UN/ECE.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE MEETING

6. Recommendations for future work are given below. Other conclusions that the participants reached at the meeting on the above topics will be presented (in English only) in a separate report to be prepared after the meeting and distributed to participants. These conclusions will also be distributed, on request, to other interested persons.

RECOMMENDED FUTURE WORK

7. The meeting recommended that a further ECE/ILO joint meeting, organized in a manner similar to seminars, be held in 2001/2002. The following substantive topics were considered of greatest interest for possible inclusion in the agenda of the next meeting on consumer price indices:

- (a) Treatment of quality changes in consumer price indices
 - Practical experiences
- (b) New data sources and technologies for data collection
 - Implications for sampling and index construction
 - Use of scanner data and other electronic data collection methods
- (c) Practical issues in maintaining the representative sample
 - e.g. methods for reflecting "new goods" appropriately
- (d) Follow-up on choice of cost of living index vs. pure price index
 - Practical implications and consequences
- (e) Treatment of electronic commerce in consumer price indices
 - Dealing with new products' prices and outlets in trading via Internet.
