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E DITORIAL

The real Europe can be found in its regions. Throughout the European Union, the desire for political transparency which prompts the work of all our institutions is generating action programmes which statistics help to prepare and administer and which are watched over by the Committee of the Regions to ensure a proper balance.

Statistics, transparency and democracy — they all go together. In the words of Bruce Millan,¹ the fact that European statistics are prepared in an objective manner, that they are transparent and that they are published is proof of the desire we all have to improve our democratic societies.

In many regions of Europe, administrative divisions which are a legacy of the past do not match the implantation of more recent 'area phenomena', which need to be observed with powerful tools used skilfully and with precision.

This work of observation falls to statistics. And statistics must also be capable of encouraging coordination in the exercise of authority between different levels of government, where sometimes independence and integration need to be reconciled.

Now that it has moved way beyond its original supporting role to become a counterpart to national policy, European regional policy has an increasing need for statistics.

European regional statistics have made it possible, using objective criteria and information, to allocate substantial resources to the regions. Statistics must now probe deep into the regions in the search for a better understanding of how our economies are 'going global'. There is a new role for European statistics in this area.

This is one aspect of the information service which Eurostat needs to provide if the European Union is to develop.

Daniel Byk

Chief Editor

Head of Unit 'Public relations, dissemination and statistical digests'

¹ Bruce Millan

Member of the Commission responsible for regional policies and relations with the Committee of the Regions.

T HE ESSENCE OF THE REGIONS

Interview with Mr Jacques Blanc
Chairman of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union

This new European institution enjoys far-reaching legitimacy, as it brings together representatives from regions of up to several million inhabitants. Its members hope to play an important political role in building a Europe which is often criticized for its lack of soul and 'democratic deficit'. A flaw crying out to be remedied by statistical information!



A graduate of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toulouse where he specialized in neuropsychiatry, occupational medicine and applied biology in the field of sport, Jacques Blanc practised medicine until 1973, concentrating on neuropsychiatry in various specialist establishments for handicapped children. In public life, he has held a large number of posts¹ at local, regional and national levels (including that of Vice-President of the French National Assembly from 1985 to 1986) and at European level (including, since 1992, that of Vice-President of the Assembly of European Regions). He is the author of a number of works, mainly dealing with the principle of individual freedoms, and holds several honorary titles.

In accordance with the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union has given birth to a new institution, the Committee of the Regions, which was set up in Brussels on 9 March 1994.

In less than five months, the Committee of the Regions has appointed its officers, set its eight standing committees to work, adopted opinions and settled on its rules of procedure.

This assembly sees its role as a political one and hopes to make its voice heard in Community debates, adding substance to the forward march of the soon-to-be-enlarged European Union.

In this article, its Chairman, Mr Jacques Blanc, who is also the

President of the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France, elaborates on a number of the guiding principles for the activities of this, the latest arrival among the European institutions.

NO QUESTION ABOUT ITS LEGITIMACY

In what way is the Committee of the Regions a legitimate Community institution?

'If we return to the period leading up to the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty — which gave birth to the Committee of the Regions — we can see that the regions and the local authorities were becoming increasingly involved in the process of building

Europe. The ratification of the Treaty on European Union gave a whole new dimension to local authority involvement and the nature of the discussions changed almost completely, with the infamous democratic deficit between the Community and its citizens becoming the dominant topic. The creation of the Committee of the Regions is very much in line with the measures designed to involve all the citizens of Europe in this vast joint enterprise.

The fact is that building Europe is no foregone conclusion. It is the ambition of the Committee of the Regions to help pursue this objective whole-heartedly, notch up more concrete successes and get the citizens of Europe more involved. Herein lies the true legitimacy of our institution.'

Expertise and influence

How do you see the role of the regions developing within the Community decision-making process?

'The members of the Committee of the Regions are determined to share their experience of daily life and strongly influence the main policy guidelines. Our very specific power can be based on expertise and influence and can be applied to areas such as structural policy or trans-European networks. The competence of the Committee of the Regions will, however, extend well beyond policies which are, to a greater or lesser extent, only associated with regional development. It will also increasingly touch upon the more general fields of economic and social policy and their regional or local repercussions for the citizens of Europe.

The Committee of the Regions has a very keen interest in the institutional reform scheduled for 1996 and will take an active part in the discussions through a special committee which it has already set up to look at this issue.'

OPINION ON COHESION

One of the first opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions concerned the Regulation setting up the Cohesion Fund. What was new about this opinion?

'The Cohesion Fund takes account of the basic objective of

strengthening economic and social cohesion by specifically seeking to reduce the gap between the levels of development of the different regions and helping the less-favoured regions to catch up.

Needless to say, this expression of European solidarity met with the general approval of our assembly. Our recommendation to the Commission was that this Regulation pay heed to the competent authorities at regional and local levels and involve them closely in the administration of the Cohesion Fund.

The partnership is operating well when it comes to implementing the Structural Funds and we should extend this successful experiment to the Cohesion Fund.'

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Regional planning policy seems to be one of the central themes of your discussions.

'Rather than just being a topic for discussion, this regional planning policy should implement solutions which promote employment and the quality of life of our citizens.

In other words, I would say that only a balanced and harmonious regional planning policy can give any real substance to the principle of economic and social cohesion.

This policy should ensure that services are maintained in less-favoured areas threatened by the consequences of over-hasty deregulation. Support should therefore be given to domestic air routes, energy distribution and facilitating access to the new telecommunications networks.

I should point out that the members of the Committee of the Regions have a perfect understanding of these issues and problems which are of vital importance to the economic and social development of the regions.'²

LET THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES BE HEARD!

In an article entitled 'Statistics and Democracy',³ Mr Yves Franchet, the Director-General of Eurostat, explained: 'When precise numerical data are lacking on a certain theme or problem, (...) conflicting

statistics feature in political discussions which frequently cloud the issue, just like watching a broadcast with interference. Instead of discussing the problem in hand, politicians spend hours disputing each other's data. (...) Without precise statistics, how can one know the best decisions to take? (...) Another example which highlights the cost incurred by the lack of statistics is when statistics are used as a basis for the allocation of funds. (...) If the figures are underestimated or overestimated or non-comparable, everybody is contributing in relation to an imaginary figure. If a country under-contributes to the Community over a number of years, it could result in a large chunk missing from the budget. The same thing goes for the programmes for the distribution of aid, structural programmes, and the administrative financing of the Commission, etc.'

In welcoming the arrival of the Committee of the Regions, Eurostat would like to set up a constructive dialogue with its authorities and its members, with the initial aim of familiarizing them with European statistics, explaining what they do and what they can do for them. It would then like to hear what suggestions this 'voice of the regions' might have and what the regional and local representatives might desire in the way of statistical information to help them in their work.

A whole list of questions

In its efforts to communicate ideas, *SIGMA* seeks to involve all those who assume some degree of statistical responsibility in Europe, be it at a technical or political, Community, national or regional level. To set the ball rolling, here are a few issues where the members of the Committee of the Regions could share their opinions with European statisticians.³

Your assessment?

How do you view/assess the European statistical system?

And the role of Eurostat in particular?

Which components should be measured?

The regions are playing an increasingly important role in the Community decision-making process. Which elements of this phenomenon that can be meas-

ured statistically would you suggest be the focus of attention for Eurostat and all the members of the European statistical system?

Which social statistics?

The Committee of the Regions will pay particular attention to the construction of a social Europe. Which aspects of social statistics will be of most use in this work?

What are the main topics of concern?

The Committee of the Regions recently decided to set up thematic committees. Which order of priority do you think Eurostat should adopt in answering their questions?

How can we monitor impact?

The approach used to determine eligible areas is different from that which should enable us to monitor the impact of the actions designed for these areas.

What will be the main demands made on European statistics by the Committee of the Regions with regard to monitoring this impact?

An information policy

What type of information policy does the Committee of the Regions envisage setting up to assess this impact?

What should the role of Eurostat be in this context?

Measuring cohesion

The Committee of the Regions has adopted an opinion on the Regulation setting up the Cohesion Fund. What does it look for from the European statistical system in order to measure this cohesion on a regular basis, particularly with a view to subsequent applications of the same principle?

What are the most important statistics?

Between now and 1996, the Commission is obliged to provide the Council with a report on the state of completion of the internal market. The Committee of the Regions will no doubt want this report to contain data illustrating the impact of this priority Community policy on the various regions of Europe. What are the main statistics it would like to see featured in this report?

SUPPORT FROM ALL QUARTERS

The messages which Eurostat seeks to get across in *SIGMA* are addressed not only to all the main private and public users of European statistics, but also to scientific and academic circles, the main trade associations, the two sides of industry, the business world and individuals. Input from all quarters is very valuable to us in our work and we will make every effort to encourage it.

¹ Mr Blanc has held the following posts:

- at local and regional level:
 - Conseiller Général (County Councillor) in Lozère (1970 to 1988);
 - Mayor of La Canourgue (since 1971);
 - President of the Association of Mayors, Deputy-Mayors and Councillors in Lozère (since 1976);
 - President of the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council (since March 1986);
 - President of the National Association of Regional Representatives (1986 to 1992);
- at national level:
 - Member of Parliament for Lozère — 2nd Marjevals constituency (since 1973);
 - Secretary of State for Agriculture (1977 to 1978);
 - Secretary-General of the Republican Party (1978 to 1982);
 - Vice-President of the UDF (1978 to 1982);
 - Vice-President of the French National Assembly (1985 to 1986);
- at European level:
 - Member of the Council of Ministers for Agriculture (1977 to 1978);
 - Chairman of the Regional Section of the Commission of the European Communities' Advisory Council of Regional and Local Authorities (1988 to 1993);
 - Vice-President of the Assembly of European Regions (since 1992);
 - President of the Working Community for the Pyrenees (1990 to 1992);
 - Deputy Chairman of the Conference of Outlying and Maritime Regions;
 - Chairman designate of the European Conference of Wine-growing Regions.

² Interview with Mr Blanc, 12 July 1994.

³ See *SIGMA* No 1 - September/October 1991.

⁴ Opinions and comments can be mailed to Eurostat — *SIGMA* Bulletin - Directorate A2, Jean Monnet Building, L-2920 Luxembourg, or sent by fax to no (352) 43 01 32594

S TATISTICS AND TRANSPARENCY OF POLICIES

Interview with Mr Bruce Millan

Indispensable when considerable funds or resources have to be allocated equitably, management statistics are also extremely useful in the implementation of regional policies. The ability to show, fully and clearly, the underlying objective data means that these policies carry forward, to the furthest reaches of the Union, the will to constantly enhance our democracies.



Having attended Harris Academy, Dundee, and gone on to become a chartered accountant, Bruce Millan first worked in the gas industry before going into politics. As President, since 1949, of the Scottish Council of the Labour Youth Movement, he was a candidate at the 1951 and 1955 parliamentary elections before being elected in 1959 for the Craigton constituency in Glasgow. Under-Secretary of State for Defence (RAF) (1964 to 1966) and for Scotland (1966 to 1970), he then went on to become Deputy Minister for Scotland (1974 to 1976), Minister for Scotland (1976 to 1979) and Opposition Spokesman for Scotland (1979 to 1983). He has received a number of honorary degrees and awards (Hon. LL. D, University of Dundee, 1989; Hon. Fellow, Paisley University, 1991; Hon. D. Litt, Heriot-Watt University, 1991; Fellowship Award, Scottish Vocational Education Council, 1992) and was appointed a European Commissioner in January 1989. He is the Member of the Commission responsible for regional policies and relations with the Committee of the Regions.

The Commission is at present emphasizing the Member States' growing interest in mutual cooperation to ensure coherency in their decisions on regional policy, especially regional development. The coming into being of the Committee of the Regions, which right away set about defining a number of specific action themes, will further underline the importance of regional policy in the process of European integration.

MANAGEMENT STATISTICS

Does the European statistical system provide you, via Eurostat, with sufficient appropriate information to manage the decision-making and assessment process for all your regional policies? What, if any, shortcomings would you highlight?

'We depend to a considerable extent on appropriate statistics being available, particularly for determining the areas which are eligible under our various regional development objectives. The criteria for allocating funds and resources must be beyond dispute. When one looks at the various ways in which the Member States record, for example, employment levels in their regions, one has a better understanding of why it is essential to carry out adjustments correctly. Eurostat's harmonization efforts must be unceasing.'

If there were no statistics

'If we did not actually have this sort of central statistical system which was recognized as totally objective by all Member States, we would never be able to do our work! There would be constant debate about how to adjust the figures.'

Eurostat's statistical system provides an essential basis for all our decisions, and particularly for Council Decisions on matters of

eligibility. This statistical information is of fundamental importance for all of us.'

Even closer standardization?

'Everything is open to improvement, of course. The way in which population densities are taken into account in the NUTS 3 nomenclature, for example. And I think that the criteria which currently differentiate NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 areas could do with being redefined somewhat. We encountered some problems when decisions were almost called into question in Member States or regions. But very few, in total. From my point of view, the statistical information which is currently produced by Eurostat is generally appropriate and sufficient for managing the policies for which I am responsible.'¹

THE CONSEQUENCES OF MAASTRICHT

Do you think that the European statistical system should

already be in a position to give a satisfactory quantified picture of the main consequences of Maastricht on Community regional policy?

'As far as I am concerned, the most important consequence of Maastricht is the Cohesion Fund. Other areas, such as the development of trans-European networks and population trends, mobility and migrations, etc. will also require huge amounts of statistical information. Maastricht turns the spotlight on everything involving European policy in the Community territory, and this will oblige us to use huge amounts of data for very functional purposes in order to make our policies work in practice, by putting us in direct touch with real needs, precisely where they are or may emerge in the European territory. We are expecting much of European statistics, and very quickly.'¹

The Cohesion Fund

For the four Member States eligible under the Cohesion Fund, the components of GNP taken into account are again based mainly on statistics harmonized by Eurostat.

In the future?

Will the approach have to be reviewed, and even new statistical work planned, if this Fund is to be extended to other countries?

'Although the 90% limit set for negotiations may appear rather artificial, eligibility for the Cohesion Fund must nevertheless continue to be based on a solid statistical foundation. The eligibility conditions of this Fund, which relate to the convergence criteria in terms of debt ratios and borrowing requirements and capacities etc., are all based on statistics which, once again, have to be collected at national level in all Member States, harmonized by Eurostat and made comparable. Obviously, if for one reason or another, there were changes to the way these statistics were collected or defined by the Member States, there would have to be immediate consultation and coordination with Eurostat!

I freely admit that statistics are not the only component to be considered (if you limit yourself to that, you sometimes run the risk of get-

Committees of the Committee of the Regions

COMMITTEE 1	Regional policy — Economic development Local and regional finance Chairmanship: D Sub-committee: Local and regional finance Chairmanship: DK
COMMITTEE 2	Rural development, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, sea and mountains Chairmanship: F Sub-committee: Tourism — countryside Chairmanship: IRL
COMMITTEE 3	Transport and communication networks Chairmanship: E Sub-committee: Telecommunications Chairmanship: L
COMMITTEE 4	Urban policy Chairmanship: I
COMMITTEE 5	Development — environment — energy Chairmanship: NL
COMMITTEE 6	Education — training Chairmanship: UK
COMMITTEE 7	Citizens' Europe — research — culture — young people and consumers Chairmanship: B Sub-committee: Young people and sport Chairmanship: GR
COMMITTEE 8	Economic and social cohesion (possibly, with social affairs and health) Chairmanship: P

ting surprising results), but they are the starting point and must remain so.¹

TRANSPARENCY AND DEMOCRACY

In the context of regional policy, in what way do you believe that statistics contribute to greater transparency and democracy?

'In terms of eligibility (and it is these decisions which are the most crucial in regional policy, as everything else follows), we constantly have to be able to demonstrate to the Member States that we are acting with maximum objectivity. Of course, we also have to take into account future trends, assessments of possible job losses, etc. But all that starts out from a statistical basis. And the fact that these statistics are drawn up objectively, are transparent and are published is testimony to the desire of all of us to enhance our democracies.¹

Being able to show the figures!

'At any time in my discussions and our negotiations, I am able to call up the facts and figures published by Eurostat! But the transparency goes beyond my contacts in the governments and regional authorities of the Member States: everything is open, and not only to

every Member of the European Parliament but also to any interested member of the public.¹

The independence of the statistical system

'It is very important that we have a Statistical Office which is dedicated to presenting the figures objectively and refusing, for whatever reason — notably political — to withhold or restrict in any way data on "sensitive areas", which we will not discuss here. There is always the temptation at national level to use statistics for political ends or propaganda. The systematic publication of statistics discourages such practices!

A major concern for me is the objectivity and availability of these statistics, as this is an essential element of the transparency which all our departments aim to practise.¹

Eurostat is at the centre of a system based on the organizations in the Member States. Is there a satisfactory two-way flow of information? Do you feel that Eurostat is sufficiently well-known?

'Perhaps not. Particularly in the wider public. No doubt, not any more than the national statistical institutes. Having said that, let's not forget that, in the same way, not all Member States have as efficient a statistical system. Let us

look at an example where regional policy came to the rescue: in Portugal, thanks to assistance under the regional funds, the statistical system was given a considerable push in the right direction so that it would be able to meet the criteria applying in other Member States. This is an example of how, on the basis of Eurostat's statistics and via the regional funds, a Member State was able to benefit from a reciprocal action, and precisely in the field of statistics!¹

REGIONAL THEMES

What will be the main areas of concern of the thematic committees which the Committee of the Regions recently decided to set up? What do you think should be Eurostat's order of priority in meeting their requests?

'The Committee is obviously very involved with regional finance and the proper use of Structural Funds. The recently-created committees together cover all aspects of Community policy, and most of them will probably have extensive recourse to large volumes of suitable, up-to-date statistical information.

Beyond the Structural Funds

In a certain number of fields, such as regional development, the Committee of the Regions goes beyond the scope of the Structural Funds. It should be pointed out that we are publishing a new edition (*EUROPE 2000+*) of our previous report which will contain a great amount of statistics from Eurostat and which may well be of special interest to the Members of the Committee.¹

Education and training

A priority area for statistics among the themes already mentioned?

'Everything is a priority in some way, but one of the subjects which would occupy us initially is education and training. We have just published our fifth periodic report — again packed with statistics — which of course deals with this subject.

It is an area where comparing the apparently comparable is not yet straightforward enough: there are so many different education systems and training programmes!

Key factors in European regional development

On the basis of past trends, from the '70s and '80s, the new Commission report, "Europe 2000+" will identify the five variables determining population settlement and the setting-up of economic activities: housing density, population and job mobility, investment, the type and quality of the infrastructure and the various networks, the environment and the quality of life.

The report notes a general trend towards divergent regional development, with some areas seeing an increase in population density and others a decrease. This trend poses problems for regional development and environmental management. The expansion of cities and particularly their suburbs is increasing the amount and duration of commuter traffic.

The report also underlines the gap between the low inter-regional mobility of populations and the relatively high mobility of employment, which follows the mobility of capital, and this could create sharp social and economic distortions in the future.

Lastly, the quality of life is becoming an important factor in regional development policy. The concentration of populations in cities or coastal areas damages the quality of life in a number of ways: air and noise pollution, difficulties in supplying drinking water, problems of dealing with household and industrial waste, and damage to the countryside by construction work and infrastructure projects.

The age at which children go to school differs from one Member State to another, and the organization into primary, secondary and university levels is very different! It is essential to be able to collect statistics on a more harmonized basis. I readily admit that this will be difficult to achieve, but let us try to do it: our ability to target properly our projects in this field depends on it!¹

TOO-HASTY DEREGULATION?

According to Mr Blanc, who is the first Chairman of the Committee of the Regions, our regional development policy 'must ensure that services are maintained in the less-favoured regions which are threatened by the consequences of too-hasty deregulation. This means maintaining internal air links, ensuring energy distribution and providing access to new telecommunication networks'. Do you share this view of regional development policy? What do you expect from Eurostat in managing and monitoring this policy?

'I also share this concern: the regional development of the Community as a whole must be carried out in a way that does not neglect the peripheral or less-favoured regions and totally avoids allowing the wealth and prosperity from being concentrated in too-limited a number of places or areas. This is one of the main themes that we elaborate on in our new publication *EUROPE 2000+*. I am therefore in general agreement with Mr Blanc: the Community's economic and other resources must remain at the disposal of all the regions, not just the richest and most privileged.

Properly measuring the key factors

Again on the basis of statistics, *EUROPE 2000+* in large part provides information on future developments in all these regions, and how these developments may affect one region in relation to another; we are concerned with urbanization, the problems posed by cities, the solutions put forward by small and medium-sized bodies, the role that they can play in regional development and the con-

tribution of rural communities, etc. All this leads us to issue policy guidelines which we hope the Member States will use extensively when they come to take their own decisions on the matter.¹

NEW MEMBER STATES, NEW REGIONS

What do you see as the main consequences of the accession of the new Member States for regional policy? What are you asking Eurostat to measure in order to assess the regional effects of this accession?

Sub-Arctic statistics

'Regional policy was in fact a central feature of the accession negotiations with the four prospective Member States. Leaving aside Austria (it has a socio-geographic configuration which is closer to that of its Western European neighbours), the three Nordic countries asked the European Union to take an imaginative approach to its structural policies in view of their land configuration, their special population concentrations and their climate, which are nothing like the average in the other Member States. The outlook of the prospective Member States was not the same as ours, and the European statistical system did not link up well with theirs. We nevertheless managed to overcome these difficulties during the

negotiations, and the lack of statistical harmonization fortunately did not prevent us from doing so. However, this harmonization needs to be pursued: in the future, the NUTS 2/NUTS 3 nomenclatures will probably have to take better account of the special geographic and demographic features of the sub-Arctic areas.¹

Details highlighted

Does regional policy highlight a lot of details which others are not concerned with?

'This is indeed a feature of regional policy: it often leads us to take decisions affecting places where the citizens are very often unaware of many of the details of the other decisions or policies adopted at Community level! A large number of these decisions, where they are clearly addressed to Member States, have until now given rise to much too-little interest at lower levels, in each country. It is in fact only regional policy which can go to these levels!

The recent accession negotiations made clear the absolute necessity of defining a new Objective 6 in order to take the special regional features of the prospective Member States properly into account: and so, we did just that! With statistical back-up from Eurostat, whose efficiency we appreciated!¹

Transnational perspectives for European regions

The Europe 2000+ report had announced a programme of transnational studies and to that end had identified eight transnational regions (Capital Centres, Alpine Arc, Atlantic Arc, New Länder, Continental-Diagonal, Latin Arc, Central Mediterranean and North Sea).

The Annex to the Europe 2000+ report presents the results of the studies for these eight regions and for each of them assesses the projected trends from now until the year 2000 and the policy guidelines which might be adopted.

As regards the characteristics specific to each regional group, the problems to be solved can mostly be grouped into the following three areas:

- development of transport and especially telecommunications infrastructures, in order to bring them closer to the centre and reduce intra-regional imbalances;
- implementation of policies to protect the environment and improve the quality of life. These policies range from limiting toxic emissions into the atmosphere in highly urbanized regions to managing the maritime basins (Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea);
- transnational cooperation to draw up development schemes as part of these public-sector policies; intra-Community cooperation as well as cooperation with neighbouring non-member countries.

Policy which is closest to the citizen?

Is regional policy the one which comes closest to the ordinary citizen?

'I think that is the case, and I will continue to reiterate this: if we want to show the people that our Union is not something distant, that our Community organization is not a bureaucratic monster and that the Commission is not a 'machine' which is either of little interest or to be feared, they must understand and recognize that our policy is tackling the most specific of problems and the essential aspects of each of their regions. It is in this way that you can solve their problems and adjust your policies in all circumstances when changes arise or are on the way.

Let us return to the question of the Nordic countries which will be joining us: when they told us they were worried that their special characteristics would not be taken into account, I pointed out that if we had been able to take into account the special aspects of areas such as the French Overseas Territories and manage to settle very special problems there, there was absolutely no reason why we could not give proper consideration to the characteristics particular to the sub-Arctic regions! We have to be able to do that with any type of region.

This is a message which definitely needs to be communicated: regional policy is not made in Brussels alone, it is made everywhere in the European territory. It has to be possible to identify a particular problem in a certain place. And in order to be able to not only identify these particular problems but also properly measure and assess them, statistics are, once again, one of our main management tools!¹

¹ Interview with Mr Bruce Millan, 28 July 1994.

RURAL HARMONY

Interview with Mr René Steichen

The formulation of policies aimed at rural development is bound to rely increasingly on well-harmonized European statistics. Historical administrative divisions no longer match the reality of a multitude of 'local phenomena' revealed by observation of the regions. Such observation requires ever more accurate and detailed data ...



A Doctor in Law and graduate of the Institut d'Études politiques in Paris, René Steichen became a notary in 1968 and a barrister in 1969, a profession he continued to practise until entering the Luxembourg Government in 1984. Mayor of Diekirch from 1974 to 1984, he was then appointed Secretary of State for Agriculture and Viticulture. After the 1989 elections, he became Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, and Minister responsible for Cultural Affairs and Scientific Research. Since January 1993, he has been a Member of the European Commission with special responsibility for agriculture and rural development.

POINTERS TO POLICIES

What kind of statistics do rural development policies¹ draw on? At what level and in what context?

At Member State level, of course, but more at regional level, and to a degree of accuracy which will frequently need to go further than the detail provided by NUTS 3, which is already very fine detail in that its criteria have identified no less than 1 044 different regions in the territory of the 12 Member States.

Identify and define

How, as a whole, do you see Eurostat's activity in monitoring the huge range of development of the regions in Europe, particularly as regards rural development?

'Generally speaking, statistics come into play, for us, when it comes to formulating policy and measures to be taken rather than at the point of implementation and execution. When policies are being framed, statistics have to give us a grasp of the situation of rural areas in the EU, allowing us to identify their problems and their strong points and to compare

them objectively. And the statistical indicators provided for by the regulations have to allow us to make an objective selection of those areas.

But what defines a rural area? If there is a dearth of Community statistics on rural areas, it is partly because many concepts are not harmonized and there are no agreed basic definitions. What is the correct statistical definition of a rural area?

It is true that rural areas exhibit a multiplicity of diverse realities. Any definition has to be able to incorporate a very wide array of information beyond the traditional socio-economic indicators, such as structural indicators on agriculture (still dominant by a large measure in rural areas) and indicators on many other sectors of activity, especially the various forms of SME, craft businesses, tourist activities, etc.

Furthermore, the problems which we have to deal with in the programmes we manage frequently correspond to areas which do not match existing administrative divisions. These 'employment areas' or 'population areas' are sometimes less extensive than an administrative region but occasionally they are considerably larger.

It is therefore extremely important for us to be able to call on a statistical apparatus which works at a very detailed geographical level.'

FULL SPEED AHEAD

While occupying 80% of the territory, the countryside is home to only 30% of Europe's population because the jobs are not there. The Community's rural development strategy has responded to this situation. What changes do European statistics indicate as a result of the course embarked on? What new observations would you like to see developed to gauge the effects of this strategy?

'The current situation is a vast improvement on a few years ago. Most major European statistics (particularly concerning employment) are available at an acceptable geographical level. To go into even more detail, statistics would have to have access to individual data which are often available only to the Member States.

At that point the figures will afford us a clear view of the changes our strategy will have brought about.

For the future, we hope to have complete statistics at Community level for every indicator, to fill in any gaps even if it means using estimates obtained by scientifically-appropriate procedures well known to statisticians. Then we hope to round off these indicators using data on the distribution of employment and value-added in the various sectors of concern to us, such as tourism, craft businesses, SMEs and the environment.'

THE NON-FARMING SIDE

Stimulating the non-farming side of the rural economy implies supporting start-up ventures, undertaking projects to protect the environment and developing the tourist potential of the countryside. What light do you expect the European statistical system to cast on these different areas of action?

'Let's talk about tourism, in particular, as a prime opportunity for diversification in rural development. Every one of our programmes confirms that it is the single activity whose potential is most easily mobilized. While the areas concerned are often handicapped by underpopulation, underindustrialization or remote location, that can be offset by an environment and tradition which have remained unchanged, something which tourists particularly appreciate. The increase in turnover from rural tourism as compared with other forms of tourism is eloquent testimony to how the huge range of rural tourism activities can attract the public.

In order to monitor these developments, we would particularly need quantifiable information on the tourist accommodation stock broken down into broad categories. Such basic information would enable us better to assess how the various regions of Europe compare in terms of tourist facilities.

Starting out from such a snapshot of the existing amenities of the various regions, we could narrow the focus to look for more detailed data in terms of turnover, flows, capacities and what draws certain

spots represent, etc., but these factors are not exactly crucial when formulating policies.'

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURES

Successfully revitalizing the rural economy is particularly dependent on improving infrastructures (communications, transport, water supply and power distribution networks). Do European statistics provide you with sufficiently 'regionalized' information to pursue the policies to be implemented in these areas?

'As we are concerned with rural development, our action in terms of infrastructures is fairly limited. Infrastructures are more a matter of regional policy as such, or of the Cohesion Fund, which concerns major rail, waterway, road and air transport projects, etc.

The measures which we support in the context we are discussing here almost always concern minor rural or forestry infrastructures or the like, maybe to serve areas of non-agricultural economic activity or tourist centres. At that level, we cannot for the moment detect any major new requirements as regards statistics on infrastructures.'

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

There has been considerable emphasis on training and educating people engaged in craft activities or working for small and medium-sized enterprises. What can, or could, statistical observation of the results of these regional programmes offer?

'We see this as a very important area. Generally speaking, the Commission is making every effort to develop human resources, and training and education have a major role to play in rural development.

The starting point, here again, would be some sort of picture of the level of initial training of the economically-active population, at the detailed regional level at which we are attempting to observe these phenomena. Being able to compare regions in terms of levels of training would make for better assessment of the training components of the rural devel-

opment programmes proposed to us. Are they realistic? Are they aiming for too wide a spread? Or are they not enough to put the population in a position to develop with the right level of training?

The ideal, of course, would be to be able to look beyond initial training, and business statistics might perhaps allow us to do so. Who, if not an employer, has an accurate idea of his staff's level of training? Whatever surveys, polls or other appropriate methods which gave us up-to-date individual training records for the regions would be extremely useful to us.'

THE EFFECTS OF THE NEW CAP

Financial aid has been earmarked for farmers who agree to produce less using natural methods and less intensive production techniques or who switch to ecological or afforestation projects. Do you believe that regional statistics can adequately observe the results of the various incentives offered?

'Not yet; these programmes are still being approved and farmers are beginning to apply for grants and undertaking to meet the conditions laid down in the mechanisms introduced.

When the time comes to take stock, we will of course draw on the huge range of agricultural statistics which are available as of now, which will give us information on yields of the main crops, areas

under crops, etc. But we will have to push observation to the point of gauging trends in the use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc. Of course, we will use *ad hoc* studies to evaluate the uptake of these programmes. But if, thanks to the new technologies open to it, and satellite observation in particular, the statistical system can provide us with detailed data and an uncluttered view of the lie of the land, we can only applaud. Remote sensing by satellite should very soon be able to measure the effect of the aid we have allocated to the afforestation of agricultural land. It could certainly offer us constantly updated data in many applications.

Otherwise, in social terms, for example, we pay close attention to being able to measure the impact of the scheme for early retirement from farming. The results will probably show marked differences from one region to another.'

LOCAL PHENOMENA

Are you satisfied with statistical observation of 'local' phenomena in agriculture, and in rural development in particular?

'Observation of phenomena at a level which does not match the administrative divisions of a place is one of our great concerns. We would like to have a cartographic representation of the types of rural areas which the statistical analyst can identify by highlighting, for example, areas facing agricultural problems due to the proximity of

urban developments (never an easy situation for rural areas) or, at the other end of the scale, very isolated, remote rural areas with a declining population, limited employment opportunities, a very distorted age pyramid, etc.

One gap which the statistical system should allow us to bridge is the lack of projections on the structural features which can characterize the rural economy. Wherever relatively strong trends can be discerned and where statisticians have the necessary basic indicators, we would like to know, for agriculture and the other sectors, what major changes are under way currently, what type of effects they will have in coming years, etc.

We are aiming for real 'statistical projections', made by statisticians who, having handed over their figures and explained their content, give the analyst a chance to draw the conclusions from them. It is, of course, up to politicians to spell out clearly, from the outset, what hypotheses are to be introduced in the whole process!'

POWER TO THE REGIONS

What priorities would you set out for Eurostat in developing increasingly effective regional statistics in the face of a growing appetite for power on the part of the regions?

'Regional statistics are constantly expanding because users need to understand phenomena at an in-

Correspondence between NUTS levels and national administrative divisions

	NUTS 1		NUTS 2		NUTS 3	
B	Régions	3	Provinces	9	Arrondissements	43
DK	—	1	—	1	Amter	15
D	Länder	16	Regierungsbezirke	40	Kreise	543
GR	Groups of development regions	4	Development regions	13	Nomoi	51
E	Agrupación de comunidades autónomas	7	Comunidades autónomas + Ceuta y Melilla	17	Provincias + Ceuta y Melilla	50
F	Zeat + DOM	8	Régions + DOM	22	Départements + DOM	96
IRL	—	1	—	1	Planning regions	9
I	Gruppi di regioni	11	Regioni	20	Provincia	95
L	—	1	—	1	—	1
NL	Landsdelen	4	Provincies	12	COROP — Regio's	40
P	Continente + Regiões autónomas	1	Comissões de coordenação regional + Regiões autónomas	5	Grupos de Concelhos	30
UK	Standard regions	11	Groups of counties	35	Counties/Local authority regions	65
EUR 12		71		183		1 044

creasingly detailed geographical level. Moreover, the regions have been given greater recognition, as attested by the existence of the Committee of the Regions.

The rise of the regions is more recent and more marked in certain countries than in others. The need for regional statistics will grow. An ever-increasing share of structural appropriations is being used in programmes with a specific geographical scope and the structural funds represent an ever-larger share of the overall Community budget.¹

Deepening, completing and developing

'What priorities are to be highlighted by statistics in this trend? We have to take the definitions covering the classification of rural areas to greater depth (and reach an agreement on these, if possible); then we have to aim to complete the statistics at NUTS 3 level (with all the indicators laid down as a minimum), and gradually to develop statistics in even more detail, taking the maximum number of parameters into account.

We are at a crucial point, where statisticians' work is extremely useful in preparing policy measures to be undertaken. We are also approaching the point when programmes launched in 1989-90 will have to be evaluated, and surveying the right socio-economic indicators will give us more material for assessment.'³

If only we can...

'If only we can have the good sense to get back to harmonious development, then the farming world will no longer be the weak link in our society, and it can play an essential part in maintaining the stability of our countries and in contributing to the effectiveness of their economic and social policies.' (Jacques Delors)⁴

Good sense needs accurate figures and complete, reliable, up-to-date statistics for agreements to be harmonious.

¹ Since an earlier issue of *SIGMA* (No 3/1993) was devoted to agricultural statistics, the interview reported here was more concerned with rural development and observation thereof by regional statistics.

² The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) was established by Eurostat in cooperation with the Commission's other departments, so as to provide a single, uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of Community regional statistics.

The present NUTS nomenclature subdivides the economic territory of the EU into 71 NUTS 1, 183 NUTS 2 and 1 044 NUTS 3 regions.

³ Interview with Mr René Steichen, 12 July 1994.

⁴ From the booklet *New vitality for the countryside*, in the European File series, 1992 — Catalogue no: CC-73-92-869-EN-C.

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RECONCILING INTEGRATION AND INDEPENDENCE

Interview with Mr José Quevedo Quevedo

Statistics in Spain are organized in a framework which coordinates the two tiers of central and regional government. Long-standing traditions, in particular at the root of a collection system which operates locally right across the country, ensure that the system is tremendously accurate, especially when it comes to calculating the active population. But the lack of harmonization with regard to many definitions and concepts in employment statistics gives rise to problems in the European context.



José Quevedo Quevedo studied at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, where he was awarded degrees in veterinary medicine and economics and a higher diploma at the School of Statistics. He also took diplomas in economic planning at the Institute of Economic Development at Alcalá de Henares and in economic planning techniques at the Ecole Nationale de l'Administration in Paris. He taught national accounts at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid for 17 years.

From 1962 he served as the INE's provincial delegate in Las Palmas and in 1967 he became a consultant to the OECD in Paris. He was appointed deputy Director-General of the INE in 1973 and one of his main tasks was as director in charge of compiling the national accounts in Spain. He became President of the INE in 1989. During his long career he has visited Venezuela and Equatorial Guinea many times on statistical consultancy missions. He was also appointed to the boards of Spain's Caja Postal (post office bank) and the Crédito y Caución credit and guarantee institute.

He has been responsible for many courses on national accounts and written several books on the subject, and on tourism statistics in his capacity as consultant to the World Tourism Organization. He has delivered many papers and reports on statistics, and especially on national accounts, at conferences and seminars both in Spain and abroad. As the head of the INE, he is the senior member of the DGINS Conference.¹

Which of the Member States provides the best example of how complex, but also how profuse, regional statistics can be?

It is Spain, where newly-independent entities coexist in harmony in a system based on long-standing traditions and where the picture it presents is full of fascinating aspects.

TWO-TIER SYSTEM

How are statistics in Spain coping with the development of the independent entities? What are the trends that can be seen? What are the problems that stem from this phenomenon?

First of all, it is essential to have a proper picture of the institutional framework of statistics in Spain if you want to understand how it has developed, what its particular features are and how central government administers a system which operates in a very decentralized fashion. Some tasks are controlled centrally, while others are carried out at the various regional levels, with maximum scope for local initiative.

Institutional framework

The institutional framework of statistics in Spain is governed by:

- the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which stipulates in Article 149.1.31a that the State has exclusive responsibility with regard to statistics compiled for official purposes;
- the Law on official statistics of 9 May 1989, which states in Article 9 that with regard to the application of Article 149.1.31a of the Constitution official statistics are deemed to be those which are referred to in Article 8; this article also lays down the content of the statistics included in the national statistical plan;
- organic laws governing the autonomous status of Spain's 17 *comunidades autónomas*; these laws indicate, either in their original form or as a result of subsequent amendments, that these autonomous regions have sole responsibility for the compilation of statistics to be used by them.

Statistics in Spain are thus organized in a two-tier system:

- (a) the statistical services of central government, i.e. the Instituto Nacional de Estadística and the statistical departments of the ministries and other official bodies (e.g. the Bank of Spain and a number of other State-run bodies);
- (b) the statistical services of the autonomous regions (including the statistical departments of municipalities or local authorities).

The Spanish statistical law, which governs the production of official statistics at State level, does not apply to statistics which are produced, as required, for the use of the autonomous regions. For those areas which do not come under national statistics, they are therefore completely free to organize things as they want!

Two tiers — but one aim

'The aim of the statistical system in Spain is to harmonize the statistical interests of the country's two tiers of administration, mainly by means of cooperation agreements which range in scope from the compilation of particular areas or sets of statistics to the joint use of instruments for coordination and integration.

The primary aim is to avoid compiling the same statistics twice and to use the same codes, concepts, definitions and classifications so that the statistics of various government bodies can be compared and integrated. Thanks to these cooperation agreements, the two tiers of official statistics — for the whole country and for the autonomous regions — use the same instruments for coordination. Where necessary, these are international ones.

Freedom and cooperation

The law on official statistics defines the relations between government authorities with regard to statistics and endorses cooperation as the basic principle.

Vertical coordination between the statistical services of central government and those of the autonomous regions is the responsibility of the Inter-territorial Statistical Committee,² which is headed by the President of the INE. The two tiers of administration are equally represented.

The job of the Committee³ is to ensure statistical coordination, cooperation and harmonization between central government and the autonomous regions. In general terms, it has to deal with all the problems of liaison between the various government levels which are involved in statistics.

Municipal level

You have to remember that Spain has about 8 000 municipalities, with approximately 350 statistical departments at municipal level, some of which are fairly large. The job of these municipal departments is to collect administrative information for strictly local purposes. They are not incorporated in the national system.

It is these municipal statistical departments, however, which keep the population records, supervised and coordinated by the INE. But apart from this task, each municipality makes up its own mind when it comes to statistics, depending on its own particular requirements and, above all, the resources at its disposal.

There is a tremendous wealth of information here. Because of the local population records they have kept, statistics has always been important in the municipalities. One point — which is perhaps to be regretted — is that the municipalities keep no business registers.

The statistical departments at municipal level are thus very free and are not integrated in the central system, except — as we said — where population records are concerned.⁴

TIERS WITHOUT TEARS

It can be said, with regard to the statistical services of the autonomous regions, that they operate in a similar way to central government, i.e. with:

- a regional statistical institute;
- statistical departments in the various branches of the regional government;
- a regional statistical council.

For historical reasons, however, and depending on resources which are often lacking at regional level, circumstances are not the same in each of the 17 auto-

mous regions when it comes to the operation of their statistical systems.

Unique situation

'At present, only eight autonomous regions have their own statistical law. Resources in terms of manpower and equipment also vary widely. Ten autonomous regions have separate statistical institutes, while in the other eight regions the statistical department usually comes under the Ministry of Economic and Financial Affairs. In theory, therefore, there could be 17 statistical laws in the autonomous regions, plus the national law. It is a very unusual set-up, and I know of nothing like it anywhere else in the statistical world. Each region can decide to allocate whatever resources it wants to encourage the production of statistics in line with the political objectives of each regional government.

The trend is for the regional governments to strengthen the statistical services at regional level, although with varying degrees of effort and determination, and generally with a particular aim in mind. In some regions, the main thrust is towards production, while in others it is geared to coordinating the work of the statistical departments in various regional government offices.⁴

What they do

The normal work of the regional statistical services consists of:

- compiling, integrating and disseminating available statistics on activities and circumstances within their territory;
- involvement, in some cases, in the production of statistics for State purposes, in accordance with cooperation agreements signed with the INE (82 agreements) and central government ministries (45 agreements);
- compiling specific statistics on their region in response to their own needs, mainly using regional administrative sources.

Any problems?

'At the moment there are no serious problems in the relations between the statistical services of central government and those of

the autonomous regions, because of the vertical coordination provided by the Inter-territorial Statistical Committee. The agreements are generally well received and most of the important problems are dealt with. In any case, as a rule the autonomous regions do not have adequate resources, in terms of manpower or equipment and money, to compile statistics other than those required by the State.

It could be that in future some regions might want to develop statistics which have less to do with national figures. It is a possibility that there might then be some overlapping. The existing laws provide for freedom of initiative and it is up to everyone to coordinate his own actions to avoid such duplication. We believe that the regions are sufficiently aware of the need to perform work which is totally compatible with what is done in other regions, by the State and also at Community level.⁴

RECONCILING INTEGRATION AND INDEPENDENCE

Do you consider that the European statistical system is capable of monitoring this phenomenon — the growing importance of the regions — when it comes to taking decisions at Community level? What difficulties do you envisage, with regard to the European statistical system, in reconciling integration and independence?

'Quite apart from the fact that a regional Europe is a reality which is going to get only stronger, the regional aspect already needs data which are broken down more and more in territorial terms and which can serve as a basis for the political decisions affecting various aspects of the European Union now and in the future.

Technical and economic difficulties

As I see it, the main difficulty in reconciling statistical integration and independence in a regionalized Europe, initially at Member State level and subsequently at European Union level, stems from two concurrent factors.

The first is a technical difficulty, arising from conceptual problems concerning statistical units and variables which are significant at national level but which may have no relevance at regional level. It is also true the other way round. The level of disaggregation of economic classifications and the scale of the profits of multiregional enterprises are other examples where there are technical difficulties. Another area is the drafting of statistical plans, which vary depending on whether they are national or regional in scope.

The second factor is an economic one, since sample sizes must be increased to get meaningful results at regional level. This means that priorities have to be decided regarding the level of regional disaggregation on the basis of what resources are available.

New resources needed

These are all problems which I feel need to be solved. It is vital to have a clear definition and a clear idea of these phenomena which are of tremendous significance at both regional and national levels. Consider the scale of sample surveys in the regions: this is a constraint which affects all regional statistics as far as levels of aggregation are concerned.

It is a political issue: how to reconcile national priorities with those of the regional governments. The latter's priorities are always very circumscribed, but their demand for information is growing all the time as more and more political decisions have to be taken at regional level.

The situation is now the same in all the Member States, with regional statistics unable to meet the needs both of the regional governments and of the Community. The fact is that, especially at the present time, it is very important to have comparable, reliable and representative statistics at Community level to ensure that resources are properly allocated and that the efforts to be made by the richer regions for the benefit of the poorer ones are fairly shared.⁴

REGIONALIZATION AND SUBSIDIARITY

Eurostat and the Member States apply the principle of subsidiarity. Is the same approach used in relations between the INE and the various institutes, centres, ministries, departments and so on which make up the statistical system in Spain?

'Subsidiarity is already in broad use in the Spanish statistical system, on account of the features which we have outlined.

We have a decentralized system in which the INE operates as a central statistical service, while the statistical departments in the ministries compile sectoral statistics, drawn as a rule from administrative sources. The particular feature of this work is that it is governed by cooperation agreements with the statistical institutes or departments in the regions, whenever there has been a transfer of responsibility in this area.⁴

The role of the INE

The INE is fully involved in its two essential tasks: coordination and production.

The former task consists of drafting the texts — definitions, concepts, classifications, etc — for statistical harmonization and integration and of drawing up the national statistical plan and its annual schedule. The statistical departments of the ministries are involved in this work by virtue of their representation on the Inter-ministerial Statistical Committee, which is responsible for horizontal coordination under the Law on official statistics.

The INE's other task is the production of major statistics such as the

national censuses (population, housing, building, local kind-of-activity units, agriculture), the survey of the active population, the survey on industrial products, the survey of industrial enterprises, the consumer price index, the household budget survey, etc. The INE is also in charge of compiling summary statistics such as national accounts and social indicators.

Which way to go for the ESS?

Can the way in which the INE's regional network is organized provide any examples that could be copied by the ESS, the European statistical system? Are there any which you would particularly like to highlight? And are there any pitfalls that you think need special attention?

'You have to make a clear distinction between the INE's regional network (the INE's branch offices in each of the 50 provinces) and the statistical institutes of the autonomous regions.

In my view, the INE's regional network cannot really provide an example for the ESS as far as the Member States are concerned, since the job of the INE's provincial offices is simply to collect and disseminate data, whereas the work of statistical production in the Member States consists of devising statistical projects with the aim of tabulating results.

I am of the opinion, however, that the national statistical programme in Spain does a very good job of incorporating the Community statistical programme. Spanish legislation has accepted all the demands of the ESS without query and has integrated them in the national plan. Every regional statistical programme in Spain complies with Community and national rules. These programmes provide for the disaggregations which are sought in line with the objectives of each region, and coordination and integration are applied at any level where they are needed. This is perhaps how an example may be provided for the ESS.⁴

REGIONAL COLLECTION

What are the main difficulties which the Spanish statistical

system encounters with regard to collection via its regional system, and how do you deal with them?

'The set-up at the INE is based on the idea of decentralization of tasks, with 50 provincial offices (corresponding to NUTS 3 level) serving the central office in Madrid. These provincial offices are entirely under the INE and are in no way linked to the statistical departments of the autonomous regions.

The result of being organized in this way is that two thirds of INE staff work in the provincial offices. They are qualified and permanent officials, with up-to-date computer facilities. Thanks to this infrastructure, we have a very good data collection system since we are close to our respondents, and this approach goes back a long time. It is a very important added advantage for our collection system.⁴

EMPLOYMENT IN THE REGIONS

Is employment in the various regions of Spain properly measured by social statistics, in the Community sense?

Very efficient survey

'The Spanish survey of the active population has an international reputation on account of the methodology used both for the statistical plan and for the collection of data. Our survey is fairly similar to the US and Canadian models. I think these are the three oldest active population surveys in the world. We work very closely with our counterparts in the United States and Canada to improve and refine the survey. In a sense, it has served as a model to the Member States, where its very rigorous methodology is widely acknowledged.

The survey is carried out on a quarterly basis. Although the Spanish survey covers a greater number of variables, we arrange things so that the survey in the second quarter of the year coincides with the Community labour force survey. The survey, which has been conducted since 1964, is broken down territorially at NUTS 3 level.



We manage to question between 62 000 and 64 000 households every three months. We get a tremendous amount of information on the labour market and on all the aspects which make it possible to produce an in-depth analysis. There are times when our survey is even ahead of the Government's regulations on the labour market.

In spite of the scale of the survey, we get it done very quickly. The results for the second quarter of this year were announced to the press during the last week of July — our fastest time ever! Normally, the results are available six weeks after the end of the quarter. Within the Community, Spain is often the first to get its results in. We are very proud of the fact, but it is all very costly.⁴

Community survey: time for revision

'It is quite clear that at Community level we are faced with serious problems regarding the definitions and concepts of some job market variables. It was for this reason that I asked the DGINS Conference at its meeting in March to include this item on the agenda for the September meeting. It is really time we made some progress on harmonizing employment statistics as a whole. Current comparisons are not at all valid.

What I should like to see is a different set of definitions to specify how unemployment is measured and how it can be compared at Community level. According to the criteria which have been adopted, you can calculate more than four million unemployed in Spain. There is no way that the jobless in Spain can account for 24% of the active population. The figure is totally wrong! It is high time to take another look at all the definitions which are used by this survey.

Spain is not the only Member State to notice the anomalies which I have mentioned. The Netherlands, for example, has come up with similar findings, although the other way round. The survey there indicates that unemployment is less of a problem than it really is. What is the reason? It seems that widespread part-time working is the cause. Apparently, there are a lot of jobs which in-

volve working for only a few hours a week, but the time put in is enough — according to the definitions used — to ignore the other days.

We also have to make a better effort to consider some particular features: working women, for example. In Spain the picture is quite different from the general Community picture. The activity rate for women in Spain is only around 35%, whereas in the Scandinavian countries it exceeds 60%. Another case in point: workers' mobility. In Spain a lot of those who are out of work, and who are close to retirement age, do not have the means to move house so that they can go and take a job far from home. Don't think they don't want to get on their bike! These people are really upset about missing a job opportunity. Fortunately — and this is one of the great features of the Spanish way of life — their need to find a job is offset by the sense of family solidarity which still exists. This explains how a million families can live off a tiny pension or a meagre unemployment allowance, without the country experiencing serious social problems.

European statistics should make a better job of reflecting all these particular features, which really typify socio-economic structures in each country, and of taking them into consideration so that genuinely objective comparisons can be made.⁴

THE CAP IN THE REGIONS

In your opinion, is an adequate job done of measuring statistically the impact of the new common agricultural policy on the various regions of Spain, their agriculture, their fishing, their agri—food industry, etc?

'If I confine myself to the statistical field which is my responsibility in my capacity as President of the INE, let me say that the compilation of primary sector statistics in Spain comes under the INE and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

The Ministry is responsible for periodic and short-term statistics, compiled mainly on the basis of coop-

eration agreements with the agricultural departments of the autonomous regions.

As for the INE, it is in charge of compiling structural statistics, i.e. the agricultural census and the survey on the structure of agricultural holdings, in accordance with European Union regulations.⁴

Does the ESS enable you to make a proper comparison of the different impact this policy has on Spain's regions in relation to the other regions of Europe?

'It may be, in fact, that Community statistics fail to describe particular situations, relating to specific agricultural products or specific agricultural sectors. It is obvious that, in some instances, a lack of comparability makes it difficult to take decisions on agricultural policy. Again, it is a problem of resources, with technical difficulties (scale of sample surveys, poorly defined variables) and economic problems. It would seem that statistical resources are inadequate throughout the Community, even in the area of agricultural statistics, which is the best equipped.⁴

MULTIREGIONAL TO MULTINATIONAL

Given that more and more multinational enterprises — even small or medium-sized enterprises — are known to be steering their profits to areas with favourable tax laws, and at a time when the world economy is becoming more and more 'global', is it not true that regional statistics have a new and important role to play? How would you describe this new role?

'To my mind, looking at things from the strictly statistical angle, the statistical problem which is currently posed by the trend towards a global world economy is not a new one. The compilation of regional statistics within a country poses similar problems. The difference is simply the territorial area to be covered, which is becoming much vaster. The experience which is gained in compiling regional statistics within a country can certainly be useful in a broader geographical context.

As I mentioned before, we have recently become aware of the need to revise many concepts, statistical units and variables, local units, establishments, enterprise units, etc. Of course, all this focuses on the real economy. When it comes to monetary and financial flows and distribution of profits among enterprises, the problem has naturally not been tackled in regional statistics. At the multinational level, however, you still have to start from a description of the real economy and its features so that you can first of all relate it to its territory and then focus further efforts on integrating the flows. I agree that this is a big problem for statistics. But I am also convinced that all those who are working on it will be clever enough to solve it.⁴

¹ Conference of the Directors-General of the National Statistical Institutes.

² Created by Article 42 of the law on official statistics.

³ Referred to in Article 43 of the law on official statistics.

⁴ Interview with Mr José Quevedo Quevedo, 14 July 1994.

A NEW ROLE FOR REGIONAL POLICY

Interview with Mr Eneko Landaburu

Having started out as a crutch to national policies, the Community regional policy now takes the form of complementary support and some tens of billions of ecus are assigned to pursuing its objectives. This places a great deal of responsibility upon European statistics, which are used as the main instrument for determining eligible areas and allocating these resources.

Having trained in law, economics and finance at the University of Paris X and the Institut Technique de Banque, Mr Eneko Landaburu worked for the administration and finance section of the Labaz holding company in Paris and its Belgian subsidiary in Brussels, before taking charge of study programmes and conferences for the European Centre for Study and Information on Multinational Corporations (ECSIM, Brussels). In January 1980, he was elected as a P.S.O.E. member to the regional parliament for the Basque Country in Spain, before being appointed as an adviser to Nestlé S.A.'s Directorate-General for Latin America in 1981 and becoming a Director of the Institute for Research on Multinationals (IRM, Geneva) in 1983. Since July 1986 he has been the Director-General for Regional Policy at the Commission of the European Communities.

As a professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Institute of European Studies), he lectures on economic and social cohesion in the EC. He is an alternate member of the Board of Directors of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and, since June 1994, has been a member of the Supervisory Board of the European Investment Fund (EIF).

A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION

The regional statistics compiled by Eurostat have had an important role to play in the implementation of the Community's regional policy, particularly since the creation of the ERDF. The first instruments for analysing and setting out the guidelines for this regional policy — the Periodic Reports drawn up from the start of the 1980s — were based on analyses which drew heavily on Eurostat's regional statistics.

With the reform of the Structural Funds in 1988, the Community adopted an integrated policy of economic and social cohesion which accorded a pivotal role to regional statistics in the implementation of decisions. In fact:

- regions eligible for Objectives 1, 2 and 5b are determined on the basis of socio-economic criteria and Community thresholds (using eligibility criteria such as per capita GDP, unemployment rates, agriculture's share of total employment, etc.);
- the allocation of finances from the Structural Funds to the Member States has been decided by the Commission (from October 1993 to March 1994) on an objective basis using statistical criteria (example for Objective 2: population of the eligible areas and unemployment rate);
- regional impact assessments have now been extended so as to increase the impact of Community policies (under the programme to quantify the progress and objectives of regional development launched in 1992 in close cooperation

with Eurostat, work on assessing the impact of the structural policies on the regions). A considerable quantity of regional statistics is required for all this assessment work.

An original approach

'European regional policy was initially one of support, offering financial assistance to sustain the efforts made under the various national plans in order to achieve harmonious economic and social development in problem regions. This policy, which gradually developed its own criteria and progressed alongside national policies, displayed some original features.

This trend was very clearly highlighted in the Single Act, where the concept of economic and social cohesion appeared for the first time. Regional policy, which did not feature in the Treaty of Rome, was officially established in this document.

Cohesion in the Single Act

It was at this point that the ERDF, the main instrument of this policy, also appeared in the Treaties. It was high time that "regional concerns" were brought to the fore, because the entry of Spain and Portugal into the Community would firmly underline the problem of regional inequalities, which had until then been of minor concern.

Even greater emphasis was placed on the need for economic and social cohesion by the introduction of the Single Market which, with a host of competitive measures being deployed to open up the European economy, would make the regional development of the less-favoured areas more difficult. It was in fact likely that with the opening-up of borders the increased efforts of the stronger nations to take part in the world economy would initially benefit regions prepared for these upheavals. Those which were not ready for such changes, due to economic, social or simply historical

reasons, would have to expect difficulties in adapting to this internal market.

Showing up the inequalities

It was then largely because of this obvious accentuation of the inequalities in an enlarged Community and the deployment of a strong single-market strategy that the need arose for the rapid implementation of a different policy, as the purpose of the previous policy had only really been to support national policies. This is where the "Delors 1 package" comes into play: some ECU 60 billion allocated to the Structural Funds for economic and social cohesion, with regional policy being the main instrument used to manage these.¹

The new members

What sort of regional policy problems would the new members like to see solved, and what can Eurostat do to help?

'Since the start of the membership negotiations with the four applicant countries (three Scandinavian and Austria), a number of contentious regional issues have had to be tackled. The most burning of these, the question of regional divisions, is currently well on the way to being solved (the only difficulties which remain are with Sweden).

Eurostat's main contribution to implementing regional policies in these countries are the statistics used to determine areas eligible for Objectives 1, 2 and 5b, as well as a new Objective 6 for the Scandinavian countries.

Regional statistics will also play a vital role in sharing out the total appropriations among the different objectives and in the evaluation work to be carried out for these countries.¹

DEFINITIONS USED FOR ALLOCATING FUNDS

To manage the European regional policy, it has been necessary to quickly set up mechanisms which help determine objectively where the funds should go, on the basis of criteria which are comparable throughout Europe but can also be applied to the numerous specific situations in all the regions. It is not difficult to appreci-

ate the absolute necessity for regional statistics which are truly comparable at European level.

Eligible areas

Eurostat's contribution has been vital since the 1988 reform of the Structural Funds, as eligible areas will henceforth be determined exclusively on the basis of statistical criteria and Community thresholds (Community averages). Both the Council Decisions for Objective 1 regions and the Commission Decisions for Objectives 2 and 5b are based on the regional statistics compiled by Eurostat in cooperation with the National Statistical Institutes.

In 1989 and in 1993, at a very early stage in the implementation of the revised Council Regulations, Eurostat provided the Commission and the Member States with statistical work which made it possible for objective decisions to be taken, although unfortunately the territorial divisions proposed by the Member States did sometimes prevent the sole use of Eurostat's harmonized statistics.

Reliability and credibility

'It is obvious that the regions can only accept a choice being imposed upon them if that choice is based on data which are sufficiently reliable and credible. Whereas the "division into areas" is fairly easy to carry out when the regions observed are homogeneous, the same cannot be said when it comes to identifying areas targeted by Objective 2. In order to define the boundaries of regions affected by industrial decline, which do not necessarily correspond to an administratively predetermined geographical level but should be viewed more as employment areas, it is necessary to have a comprehensive statistical knowledge of the environment.

European statistics are an essential work tool when it comes to distributing the funds earmarked for this policy.¹

Widely acceptable

This statistical instrument seems to have provided a considerable amount of satisfaction. 'The best proof of this is that use of this tool has not been contested as regards the criteria used and the method of drawing them up. This despite the fact that the amounts at stake are colossal: ECU 60 bil-

lion in the "Delors 1 package" and ECU 155 billion for the "Delors 2 package", from 1994 to 1999! If the tools used had not been credible, protests would have come raining down from all quarters in the Member States! This was not the case, however, and we can in fact honestly say that in the vast majority of cases, this 'Community manna' has been dished out to the general satisfaction of all. There is no doubt whatsoever that the statistical work carried out by Eurostat has given great satisfaction to both the Commission and the Member States.¹

Can improvements be made?

This tool can obviously be further perfected. The figures available are sometimes incomplete and the data are sometimes rather out-of-date — traditional shortcomings of official statistics.

Possible improvements

When the results are criticized for being incomplete and sometimes very out-of-date, this basically applies to regional statistics on employment, stocks and the quality of the infrastructures, training and R&D activities.

Some Member States feel that, despite the substantial amount of technical assistance already provided by the ERDF, updating of the regional accounts is still proceeding much too slowly. The hope is that the current work on national accounts (implementation of the GNP Directive) will appreciably improve the quality of these regional accounts.

Finally, the process of collecting information on the socio-economic situation in the regions of Eastern Europe should be accelerated as part of the preparations for the membership negotiations which will probably begin over the next few years.

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

What can we expect from European statistics in the field of regional planning policy?

'We need to follow the trends which are emerging: in the long term, regional policy cannot be restricted to its present function of administering appropriations granted to eligible areas. The reali-

ties of the internal market and the advent of an organized and homogeneous economic area will eventually result in the territory of the European Union being transformed into a "single area". Thought will then have to be given to ways of helping the Member States take the most suitable measures and decisions in the field of regional planning.

The disappearance of internal frontiers should lead to greater cross-border cooperation which will help submerge the legacy of these former frontiers within the new economic and social order. Thus the need for regional cross-border statistics to help guide our activities. For this planning process to be successful, much thought will need to be given to making optimum use of this "single area" for all the human activities which will be carried out there.

A new role

Although the Commission has no specific responsibilities in this field, the national governments have entrusted us with the task of coming up with ideas and helping to share experiences. We hold meetings about twice a year with the Ministers responsible for regional planning in the Member States. So far the Commission has not made any concrete proposals on these occasions, but it does have a vital role to play in offering a panoramic view of the situation. It can supplement what each individual partner knows with explanations as to what is happening elsewhere and how choices made in one country can affect the situation in another, etc. Our role is to provide each country with this type of "value-added" information so that the choices it makes are compatible or synchronized with those of its neighbours.

Here again we require good statistical information on the situation: the infrastructures, environmental issues, demographic problems, etc. — any area where statistics are needed for us to be able to produce assessments, comparisons and, when the time is right, suitable proposals.¹

Dynamic and forward-looking

As things stand at the moment, it would of course be premature to come up with a list of desired series or specific variables to be collected at the required level of

detail (i.e. infra-regional). However, there is already enough material available to construct a basic blueprint or model which could attempt to include various socio-economic, physical and environmental factors influencing human activities throughout the expanding territory of the European Union.

The process of regional development, the introduction of trans-European networks and the opening up of the Community's eastern borders are all dynamic developments, the real impact of which should be measured over the course of time in a physical area which is not defined by administrative frontiers.

'The collection of data at municipality level would seem to be a good compromise, as they could then be reaggregated to higher observation matrices. The possibility of extending this approach to the results of the family budget survey could be examined with a view to determining how many new relevant data could be derived from them. This type of exercise could provide an opportunity to improve the supply of information in a number of less traditional areas: life-style, mobility, urban problems, etc..²

GISCO

The GISCO³ geographical information system developed and run by Eurostat is an 'intelligent system' which combines the most modern computer techniques for digital processing and spatial analysis and seeks to code, store, process, maintain, analyse and present data by linking them to their geophysical location: a 'georeferenced' representation.

'As we are a major user of geographical statistics and all the cartographic material which normally comes with them, we have been involved in the GISCO project from the outset, and by developing our own capabilities in this area we have also increased our confidence in the greater potential of the GISCO system.

We feel it is important that the purpose of GISCO be well and widely understood and that this awareness filter through to the vast number of potential users for whom this system was created.¹

A COMMITTEE FOR THE REGIONS

The Committee of the Regions is a new advisory body set up by the Treaty on European Union which must be consulted in a number of areas (education, culture, public health, trans-European networks, economic and social cohesion), can be consulted in some other fields and may issue opinions on its own initiative in cases in which it considers such action appropriate.

How can it contribute to the 'statistical dialogue' which Eurostat is supposed to arrange and promote with all the operators and institutions involved in regional policy.

Getting closer to the man in the street

'This Committee is very important for us: we are convinced that true European integration cannot be achieved unless the citizens of Europe take an active part and local and regional levels become involved in European policies.

Building Europe solely upon the initiatives of the Community institutions, the Member States and their central governments will not work. The referendums held to ratify the treaties and the recent European elections clearly demonstrated that the institutions running our Union are not viewed as being democratic enough and that the Union is too remote from its citizens.

To make up for these shortcomings, a policy needs to be developed which brings Europe closer to the electorate and offers them a more concrete presentation of the results of the actions carried out. This will help them to appreciate the effects of European solidarity, which has been established by common consent, and the activities it promotes.

All this should be done in tandem with the local authorities, which are the only bodies capable of transmitting this positive message to all levels of the population. The Committee of the Regions shares this desire to involve all the citizens of Europe.

In line with the intention of those who set it up, this Committee enjoys far-reaching legitimacy, as it brings together representatives from regions which can number up to several million inhabitants,

and there will be a strong political content to their discussions. It is probably still too early to begin work on specific statistical instruments to meet their requirements, but there is every reason to believe that these representatives will show a very keen interest in Community statistics.¹

A wealth of diversity

'For its part, the European Parliament has already frequently stressed that we need a better statistical knowledge of the territory of the Union, so that we can offer better opportunities for making comparisons between widely diverging circumstances, without detracting from the value of this diversity.

However, it is an unhappy coincidence that we are faced with rapid socio-economic developments at the very time when it is increasingly difficult to arbitrate within very tight budgets. Consequently, the policies we adopt have to react very quickly to urgent and immediate needs, and situations which have hitherto been observed and measured in terms of per capita GDP and unemployment can, in future, no longer be analysed on the basis of these criteria alone. We will need many more!

We do not have the tools we really need in order to obtain elements of comparison and descriptions of the situations in the various urban environments where poverty, social exclusion, drug abuse and unemployment are rife. We should, however, try to identify as accurately and quickly as possible the 'geographical realities' of situations where the evils of our society have come to a head, since the advent of a dual society would carry the risk of exploding as certain social tensions become impossible to contain.¹

DIALOGUE AND ANTICIPATION

For the resources employed in setting up a suitable regional policy to be used reliably, effectively and to their full advantage, more and more statistical elements, instruments and figures will be needed. But how does one determine today the statistical information requirements of three or five years' time?

'Our aim is to be constantly aware of certain trends and on the lookout for anything which may indicate these to us. This is why we try to maintain a constant dialogue with Eurostat. We should be in a position to draw the attention of statisticians to trends which we would like to examine in the future. For their part, the statisticians should be able to tell us at all times what information they have, what new surveys they would suggest, the paths we should or should not follow, and why. In this way we will progress by taking concrete decisions to perfect and improve the statistical tool, constantly adapting it to changes in circumstances and setting priorities where they are needed, depending on the resources available.'¹

Now more than ever before, European regional policy needs to be able to anticipate events and changes, and regional statistics need to form part of a harmonized set of European statistics. The citizens of Europe, who are directly concerned by these developments, are monitoring them closely and so much the better, since it is after all for their sake that we are constantly forging the links between statistics and democracy!

¹ Interview with Mr E. Landaburu, 7 July 1994.

² Marios Camhis.

³ GISCO: Geographical information system for the commission. A geographical information system for the Commission developed and run by Eurostat, it brings a spatial dimension to the European statistical system.

R REGIONALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

Interview with Mrs Lidia Conde de Artiaga Barreiros, Mr Gilles Decand and Mr Joachim Recktenwald

European regional statistics have made it possible, using objective criteria and information, to allocate substantial resources to the regions. What more can be done to improve the process of information collection by extending it to the regions? Are regional statistics going to assume a new role in the search for a better understanding of how our economies are 'going global'?

Mrs Barreiros is an economist and specialist in development programmes who began her career as a civil servant in Portugal. She worked for the Central Planning Department before moving to the cabinet of the State Secretary for Planning, where she was involved in particular with the social aspects of development. As a consultant to the ILO, she studied essential requirements as part of the World Employment Programme and was involved in the Dutch cooperation programme. She was a member of several technical assistance missions to countries in the Third World. After teaching political economy and social planning at the faculty of economics in Lisbon and socio-economic modelling at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, she joined Eurostat at the end of 1987. Since last year she has been Director of Social and Regional Statistics and Structural Plans.

A graduate in economics at the University of Paris I and in statistics at the Ecole Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Economique (ENSAE) in Paris, Gilles Decand was seconded by INSEE to the Ministry of Labour and the customs department. At the same time he lectured at the University of Paris IX and was in charge of work on descriptive statistics and probability theory at ENSAE. He joined the Commission and Eurostat in 1980, working first on agricultural statistics and then in the living and working conditions unit. In 1989 he was appointed Head of the Statistical Information Unit and earlier this year he became Head of the Regional Accounts and Indicators and Structural Plans Unit.

Joachim Recktenwald took a degree in economic science at the University of Saarbrücken before joining the Commission in 1987, where he has since concentrated on regional statistics. Since the end of 1990 he has been directly involved in producing the Portrait of the Regions, a work which in 1993 took the European Information Association award for official publications.

As major Community instruments for economic and social development, the Structural Funds have been called on to play an important role, together and in correlation with national and regional policies, in economic convergence. While only Objectives 1, 2 and 5b are specifically regional in scope,¹ the others also present a regional aspect which closely affects those regions which are beset by economic and social problems.

CHOOSING AREAS

What were the biggest difficulties which Eurostat encountered in carrying out the work to identify the eligible areas? How would the work be done differently, now, if these areas had to be identified again?

'It was especially the lack of recent data which posed a problem, and the lack of regional precision in some instruments, such as the labour force survey. We were also relying on the most recent population censuses, in spite of the fact that not all the results were available. In future, it would be a good idea if we could foresee requirements as much as possible. But there is going to be a lot of political discussion before then.'²

'We have to cope on the one hand with the problem of what data are available, and how up-to-date they are, and on the other with a certain lack of flexibility in the statistical system in response to the inevitable adjustments which stem from any political discussion. If we have the data to answer a request prompted by such discussion, well and good. But if we don't have them we have to get back to the Member States which, once again, may or may not have the data. If they don't, it means more expenditure and sometimes very lengthy delays.'³

'As part of enlargement to take in the four new Member States, a new Objective 6 has been defined, based on a "population

density" indicator. This is another new request for information which Eurostat has easily coped with, because in this case the basic data were available at the Statistical Office. Was there any way this request could have been foreseen? The fact is that the statistical aspect should always be in the forefront of political considerations, and if possible it should even be ahead of them.²

DETAILING INFRASTRUCTURE

An obvious objective of the Structural Funds is to help with the implantation of infrastructure. In your opinion, do European statistics have the resources to measure properly existing infrastructure facilities in the various regions which are to be targeted by the Structural Funds?

'Indeed, it will have to be possible to compare regions in this respect. What infrastructure do they have? Is it going to be possible, at the end of the specified periods, for the Structural Funds to narrow the gap between regions? It is especially in the case of regional impact assessments — a job of putting figures to things — that there is a demand for statistics on infrastructure.

There are a lot of conceptual problems: how can you define all this infrastructure? Let me give an example: some years back there was a Commission study which attempted to rank the Member States by the excellence of their infrastructure, and it concluded that Greece was the best equipped. The composite indicator that was used had given a very strong weighting to ports and airports, and since the countless Greek islands almost all have a port and very often have an airport, this particular circumstance had a tremendous impact on the report's conclusions.

Apart from this pitfall, there are also considerable methodological problems, with definitions and concepts which are not always all that clear. How can you calculate the degree of access to motorways, for instance? These are examples which can show how requests for information do not yet seem to be able to get expressed clearly enough.³

REGIONAL COLLECTION AND HARMONIZATION

Are the statistics which are produced by the NSIs harmonized enough to be added together within the European statistical system? What about social statistics, for example?

'Harmonization among regions in the same Member State is the responsibility of the NSIs. Eurostat ensures consistency between regional data and national figures, and then the comparability of national figures between the Member States.

In the field of social statistics, for example, the number of people registered at job centres is governed by the same concept in every region of a Member State, but there is just no comparability between one Member State and another. Consequently, Eurostat calculates comparable unemployment rates using the results of the Community labour force survey based on a standard application of the ILO international definition, and it uses the number of people registered at job centres only for regional breakdowns of harmonized national figures.

You have to remember that for the labour force survey there is a regulation and a whole series of rules to be complied with by the Member States so that the statistical results are comparable, but there is no Community questionnaire. Each country has devised its own national questionnaire to implement the Community guidelines at the national level. This is where we may run up against problems of harmonization and comparability, problems which Eurostat is constantly endeavouring to reduce.²

'Cross-border cooperation may be a good way of bringing certain national practices into line. When three or four neighbouring regions which belong to different Member States attempt to work together on some job or publication, they inevitably run into methodological problems which get people thinking at the national level. We find, for example, that this kind of inter-regional cooperation is easier to achieve in the CEE countries⁴ and that we get quicker comparable results for regional offices than for national departments, where there can be a great deal of inertia.³

Regional accounts

Do the NSIs have any special difficulties when it comes to applying the rules which Eurostat recommends for regional accounts? And what are they?

'Some countries have problems because of the very precise territorial breakdown which needs a tremendous number of specific statistical sources. Look at the data on employment and value-added at NUTS 3 level, for instance. Another point is that a uniform application of the methodological principles which have been worked out is still not an automatic response. We have just come to the end of a lengthy effort with all the Member States and we are now embarking on a fairly ambitious phase of applying a set of principles. These are the two main types of difficulty with regard to regional accounts. If the recently-accepted rules are applied, we are well on the way to achieving a rapid improvement in very detailed regional statistics.⁵

PUBLIC SECTOR

Can regional and local data on the public sector provide harmonized statistics for the whole of the public sector in Europe?

'Once again, there are problems of methodology and definitions for the public sector which have to be solved. While we can get a fairly good picture of local government, it is central government where the problems get trickier. We are arranging a seminar on the subject⁶ which will focus on the introduction of a common system for drawing up the regional accounts of central government. We are hoping that with the involvement of all the relevant departments at the Commission and in the Member States we can work out a clear definition of data requirements concerning the public sector.²

'There is a tremendous demand in this area. But there is still a long way to go, with regard both to clarifying this demand and to organizing the methodological work to be undertaken. It is very likely going to be some years before we get any data that can be published.³

EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

In the search for greater transparency with regard to what the Community does, is there any information policy for the statistical evaluation of the impact of actions stemming from the application of regional policies?

'There is an information procedure, mainly based on periodic reports published by DG XVI on the structural policies. These reports rely heavily on statistical data.

The breakdown of the Structural Funds by objective and region was previously covered in the form of detailed financial data — the "financial assistance" of the European Communities — which we might well publish again.

In addition, as a supplement to our *Portrait of the Regions*, we have put out a *Portrait of the Islands*, which looks at the features and socio-economic circumstances of every one of the 440 or so inhabited islands which account for nearly 5% of the territory of the European Union. We are currently working on a regional portrait of the EFTA countries.

There is a growing demand for publications from the countries of Eastern Europe, especially about the countries which signed the Visegrad Agreement (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). Their application for membership was accepted in principle at Copenhagen, and by the time they join the Union they should be in a position to match the Member States in their ability to supply all the statistics which the current members are required to provide for the European statistical system.

There are two problems to be solved with regard to the CEE countries. First of all, we have to work out with them a clear definition of their regional breakdown, looking at just how their countries are divided administratively and how stable these divisions are and how they are changing. Next, we have to help them in determining their precise statistical needs, in coordination with all those involved and especially as part of the extensive PHARE and TACIS programmes.³

Helping the Committee of the Regions

How is Eurostat planning to follow the work of the Committee of the Regions? What kind of requests can the Statistical Office expect to help the Committee in its work?

'It is likely that the Committee of the Regions is going to start by using all the existing publications. It is up to us to publicize the regional statistics which we produce, such as the *Portrait of the Regions*, the *Portrait of the Islands* and the other publications we mentioned. As for requests from the members of the Committee, it is likely that they are going to be fairly precise in the case of financial monitoring: how much, who to, what for? Impact studies should then follow: how to assess on each occasion the effect of the aid provided in specific regions, specific types of region, etc.'²

REGIONAL EFFECTS OF THE SINGLE MARKET

The Commission is supposed to have ready by 1996 a report on the effects of opening the internal market. Economic operators and politicians are probably going to look to European regional statistics for insight into assessing these effects. In your opinion, what are the main requests that are going to have to be met by European regional statistics in this assessment operation, region by region?

'It came as something of a surprise to realise how few requests we had received so far, for regional statistical data, with a view to assessing the effects of the single market. We should be inclined to deduce that it is still too early to be able to measure the regional impact. On the other hand, when it comes to cross-border cooperation, it may already be possible to see how the "erasure" of borders has changed the nature of the regions concerned and strengthened the links between them.'³

A NEW ROLE?

More and more enterprises, even SMEs, have 'gone multinational'. In an increasingly global world economy, they are steering their profits towards areas with favourable tax sys-

tems. As the traditional sources for statistical information gradually disappear — sources such as customs departments, which were a major contributor to reliability — are regional statistics not destined to have a new role to play? How would you describe this new role?

'There is a lot of talk about what is at stake for statistics in a world coping with the globalization of economies. At Eurostat, we have endeavoured to keep a close watch on this phenomenon, and we have carried out major work on the topic.

Do regional statistics have a role to play in observing and understanding this move towards globalization? I cannot see any specific role for regional statistics, but rather a way of using such statistics to get a better idea of some aspects of globalization. In some regions, in fact, the phenomenon of "relocation" is closely linked to globalization. There is no doubt about it. But the side-effects of these changes at regional level cannot yet be assessed.'²

Modern European statistics are going to use telematic networks so that the collection procedures are located as near as possible to the sources. In whole areas of statistics, such as agriculture or services, are we going to have to make do with the information that the NSIs pass on, or are we going to bring into the process a whole network of regional and local correspondents, who may be the only people with certain information? At a time when European statistics are trying to give the maximum boost to the process of integration between the NSIs and Eurostat, is there a real need to extend and expand the whole network?

'There is no doubt that the future is going to bring a glut rather than a dearth of information. We are going to get massive amounts of data from satellite remote sensing and hundreds of new computerized statistical sources — with a tremendous amount of detail — are going to spring up, sometimes directly from enterprises. How are the NSIs going to react to lightning-fast changes in the world of statistical information? Is the "collection monopoly" which they have compatible with these changes? And how are we going

to make sure that what they produce is harmonized, when you look at all the sources that in theory could be tapped?

This is not just a problem for regional statistics. But it could be that this statistical area will be a great testing-ground where experiences and views can be exchanged, so that we end up with the best possible use of sound statistical information, whether from private or public sources, which official statistics will naturally have to manipulate and process in accordance with its own criteria.³

Thematic approach

'We are trying to apply a thematic approach to regional statistics. Topical themes, such as urban problems, are emerging. We should like to work on a whole range of topics, since exploitation of these themes would allow us to make the best possible use of the vast amounts of data we possess. As for the themes which get priority treatment, we are more than ready to listen to the views of our users.'^{2 7}

less industry on the periphery of the Union. They include three whole countries (Greece, Ireland and Portugal), about 70% of the territory of Spain, the south of Italy, Corsica and the French overseas departments and Northern Ireland. Since the beginning of 1994, the new *Länder* and East Berlin in Germany, the Hainaut regions of Belgium and France, Cantabria in Spain, Flevoland in the Netherlands and the Highlands and Islands and Merseyside regions of the United Kingdom have been added. These regions account for a population of 92 million, or 26.6% of the European Union total. The requirements of restructuring and development in these regions result in priorities involving the modernization of transport and (tele)communications infrastructures and power and water supplies, research and development, vocational training, business services, etc.

The industrial areas in decline targeted by Objective 2 are primarily those which meet the following criteria: an unemployment rate above the Community average, a percentage of jobs in industry (in relation to total employment) equal to or above the Community average and a decline in the number of jobs in industry.

The list, which is reviewed every three years, includes 70 regions in nine Member States with 58 million inhabitants (16.8% of the total Community population). Priority in these regions is accorded to the encouragement of new activities, restoration of sites, land or buildings, reconversion and enhancement of the region's image, training, research and development, strengthening of links between industry and the universities, etc.

The areas covered by Objective 5b are selected on the basis of their 'rurality', the number of people employed in agriculture, their socio-economic circumstances in terms of per capita GDP and their peripheral location. In addition to the regions covered by Objectives 1 and 2, there are 71 which have been selected under Objective 5b. The effort in these regions, which with 28.5 million inhabitants account for 8.2% of the total Community population, is geared to the diversification of activities and the creation of non-agricultural jobs, especially in tourism and small and medium-sized enterprises.

(Source: DG XVI, 4 August 1994).

² Interview with Mrs Lidia Conde de Artiaga Barreiros, 5 July 1994.

³ Interview with Mr Gilles Decand, 5 July 1994.

⁴ CEE countries: Central and East European countries.

⁵ Interview with Mr Joachim Recktenwald, 5 July 1994.

⁶ See the article on the seminar in this edition of *SIGMA*.

⁷ Comments and suggestions should be sent to Eurostat, *SIGMA* — *The bulletin of European statistics*, Directorate A2, Jean Monnet Building, L-2920 Luxembourg, or faxed to (+352) 43 01-32594

¹ The regions covered by Objective 1 are generally those where per capita GDP is below 75% of the Community average. Usually they are regions with relatively

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ISSIONS, VISITS AND MEETINGS

INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

New York, 11-15 April 1994

Mr Franchet, Eurostat Director-General, took part in the special session of the United Nations Statistical Commission chaired by Mr J. Olensky (Poland). Mr H. Habermann, the former head of statistics in the United States, had replaced Mr W. W. Seltzer as Director of the United Nations Statistical Division.

The main aim of this special session was to review the process of reinforcing international statistical cooperation and to prepare for the introduction of the 1993 System of National Accounts.

A report on this meeting may be obtained from the Eurostat secretariat concerned (tel. 352 4301 32459).

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS: COOPERATION WITH THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Minsk, 25-29 April 1994

A seminar on agricultural statistics and database management, organised by the OECD Centre for cooperation with the economies in transition to a market economy, the ECE Geneva, Eurostat and the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), was hosted by the State Committee for Statistics and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus. It was financed jointly by the OECD and Eurostat (TACIS).

Around 130 participants attended, from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Tadjikistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uzbekistan.

The aim of the seminar was to assist the countries in transition to a market economy, and particularly the Republics of the former Soviet Union, in compiling new agricultural statistics in preparation for the '2000 round' of agricultural censuses planned by the FAO.

This was the third seminar organized in this series of ECE-Eurostat-FAO-OECD working meetings under the auspices of the inter-secretariat working group on agricultural and food statistics for the countries in transition to a market economy.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

Washington, 28-29 April 1994

The participants at this meeting of the Balance of Payments Committee agreed that a coordinated survey on portfolio positions be carried out in 1997. It was to be carried out by the main countries so as to guarantee sufficiently wide coverage. The technical details of this type of survey had still to be decided because there were still considerable differences between the 'custodians' and the 'principals' approach, for example.

BANKS: WHAT OUTPUT?

Geneva, 30 April 1994

On the occasion of the annual meeting enabling members of the OECD and the ECE Geneva to exchange their views on national accounts, Eurostat and the IMF organized a meeting attended by some 15 very high-level experts from various member countries.

This meeting allowed a number of conceptual problems to be clarified, although these could not all be solved, unfortunately, and indicated that no priority was being given to a problem which will probably remain unsolved in the immediate future: a controversy concerning how to assess banks' intermediation margin and to allocate their output between lenders and borrowers.

WEST AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Dakar, 9-11 May 1994

At the invitation of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), Eurostat took part in the meeting of the committee directing the process of economic integration of the member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), created in January 1994.

This meeting brought together the seven members of the UEMOA, the BCEAO, the World Bank, the IMF, France and the European Commission. As part of UEMOA regional macroeconomic supervision, Eurostat and the INSEE will provide backing for a project to improve the quality of national consumer price indices. External trade and monitoring informal activity and employment in urban areas were identified as two other areas for action by Eurostat.

THE USE OF NOMENCLATURES

Alma Ata (Kazakhstan), 1-3 June 1994

Eurostat led a one-week seminar on the use of product nomenclatures in external trade statistics. The programme was aimed at the statistical and customs services of the five Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union.

CEIES

Paris, 2-3 June 1994

The meeting of the sub-committee for evaluating statistical programmes brought the members of the working parties and the representatives of the NSIs together in the presence of the statistical adviser to the EFTA countries, Mr Brügger, with a view to the EEA/EFTA countries' participation in the work of the CEIES from September 1994 on.

The CEIES (European Advisory Committee on Statistical Information in the Economic and Social Spheres), which held its inaugural meeting in Brussels in March

1992 with Mr Henning Christophersen, Vice-President of the Commission and Commissioner responsible for Eurostat, in the chair, sees itself as a meeting place for the economic and social world. It seeks to enable the various partners to state their concerns and requirements in terms of statistical information concerning major Community policies.

Briefly, the CEIES's task consists of suggesting how best to coordinate the various Community and national statistical programmes, especially by seeking to improve the quality of work and through greater acceptance of suggestions raised by surveys.

■ DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

Luxembourg, 1-4 June 1994

This working session was led by the Conference of European Statisticians and Eurostat and organized with the assistance of ISTAT (the National Statistical Institute, Italy), Statistics Netherlands, the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), Statistics Norway, the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics and the US Bureau of the Census.

More than 80 participants from national statistical offices, demographic research institutes, universities and other institutions represented the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Beyond examining a great number of general considerations in terms of producing demographic projections, this session aimed to evaluate the state of the art with regard to the following types of projection:

- sub-national population projections;
- household and family projections;
- projections in terms of labour forces and those seeking employment.

Interesting discussions on each type of projection dwelt on promising new methods and their potential use by political decision-makers.

All the documents presented and the proceedings of the seminar may be obtained from Eurostat, C3/092.

■ COMMITTEE ON MONETARY, FINANCIAL AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS STATISTICS (CMFB)

Luxembourg, 7-8 June 1994

This eighth meeting was chaired by Mr Bart Meganck of the National Bank of Belgium.

ESA revision

The CMFB approved a proposal for a Regulation concerning the European System of National and Regional Accounts in the European Union and the overall data to be collected. Its implementation aimed for a 'triple impact': simultaneous introduction of the new ESA for economic and financial accounts, adoption of the fifth edition of the IMF Balance of Payments Manual and work on the parallel economy in the context of the GNP Directive.

The CMFB expressed reservations on whether the ESA should contain rules concerning financial intermediation services indirectly measured. It recommended that the Member States forward their opinions to the Statistical Programme Committee, which would take the decision.

Financial accounts

The 'Financial Accounts' Working Party submitted and received approval for a new mandate, extended to include the implementation of the protocol concerning the excessive deficit procedure.

On work on financial services statistics, the CMFB decided to circulate among its members a questionnaire containing only the five or six variables (and their accompanying methodological explanations) which seemed pertinent to banks and other financial institutions. The Member States were asked to reply without delay, so as to allow the Working Party to prepare a new progress report to be submitted to the next meeting of the CMFB (late January 1995).

Balance of payments

The Member States were asked to continue the tests on electronic data interchange via Edifact, so that the CMFB could adopt a final position at its next meeting. Where Intrastat statistics were concerned, it was decided to monitor their progress very closely in the coming months and to emphasize improved quality.

Ecu statistics

The CMFB was satisfied with the publication on the yield curve. Eurostat's plan to develop its own statistics on commercial uses of the ecu was welcomed.

Consumer price index

The working party on the new strategy for harmonizing consumer price indices had been able to provide the Commission and the European Monetary Institute with fresher data, so that an evaluation of the results achieved in terms of degrees of convergence and inflation rates could be carried out by the end of 1996, as provided for in the Treaty.

For information

A number of other dossiers were submitted to the CMFB for information:

- preliminary proposals from the EMI statistical working party on the interest rates to be taken into consideration for the purposes of the Maastricht criteria;
- the progress of work on the key for allocating EMI financial resources for the purposes of the enlargement of the EU;
- the schedule to be set (September/October 1994) for discussion in the Council on a draft Regulation on Community action in the statistical field.

■ WAGE STATISTICS

Luxembourg, 8 June 1994

A group of representatives of Slovakia visited Eurostat to obtain a better understanding of its system of statistics on wages and labour costs. Its experts also presented their own plans.

Slovakia is therefore setting up a labour cost survey based on the methodology recommended by Eurostat. The Slovak Statistical Institute is also interested in setting up two surveys

under development: the European employment cost index (EECI) and the wage structure survey.

■ ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination)

Rome, 8-10 June 1994

The 28th session of the ACC Sub-Committee brought together the heads of the statistical offices of the international organizations, mostly Members of the United Nations, or specialist agencies. Eurostat and the OECD attended.

The crucial point on the agenda concerned the activities of the eight working groups set up by the Statistical Commission (on prices, national accounts, industry and construction, distributive trades, finance, environment, trade in services and poverty).

■ TRANSPORT STATISTICS

Voorburg, 13-15 June 1994

This was the first Eurostat/UNECE workshop on the development of transport statistics in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Organized with the support of the CBS and the PHARE project, this workshop enabled more than 60 participants (most representing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe) to identify better common priorities and problems specific to each country.

The meeting gave rise to an initial discussion on the need for harmonization of procedures and methods in the developments under way, as planned for the immediate future.

The next workshop, which could take place in June 1995 with the support of the Statistisches Bundesamt and the PHARE project, could look at pragmatic aspects of methodology and data collection on road transport statistics.

■ CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Paris, 17 June 1994

The 42nd plenary session chaired by Yvan Fellegi (Canada) brought together 36 countries from Europe and North America and a number of observers and international organizations, including Eurostat.

The meeting was largely devoted to approving the UNECE statistical programme. The discussion focused on the presentation of the ECE, OECD and Eurostat programmes.

The conference also discussed the minimum list of basic statistics for the countries in transition to a market economy and certain fundamental principles in official statistics. It agreed to make its contribution to the United Nations Social Summit to be held in Copenhagen in 1995.

■ MIGRATION STATISTICS

Prague, 20-22 June 1994

On the joint initiative of the countries of Central Europe and Eurostat, a seminar on migration statistics enabled representatives of various countries (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, Austria and Italy) to discuss the replies to the CIS questionnaire and the Eurostat special study on migration statistics.

Also devoted to discussing national reports prepared by certain countries, the seminar was a great success, and considerable interest was expressed in the continuation of its work. The Slovenian statistical office offered to host the next meeting.

■ EXTERNAL TRADE STATISTICS

Moscow, 21-24 June 1994

Eurostat participated in a seminar on external trade statistics organized by the World Bank. It was aimed at officials in all the Republics of the former Soviet Union, and stressed the link between external trade statistics and the balance of payments and national accounts.

■ ENERGY STATISTICS

Luxembourg, 27 June 1994

This was the third meeting of the 'Renewable Energy Sources' Working Party. A special booklet containing the most significant series on energy had been prepared for Members of the European Par-

liament, who would receive it at the first meeting of the Energy and R&D Committee.

■ CHINESE DELEGATION

Luxembourg, 27-28 June 1994

A Chinese delegation representing the State Statistical Bureau, the External Trade Ministry and the Customs Administration visited Eurostat. The exchanges of views particularly concerned external trade statistics, services statistics and training.

■ IMMIGRATION

Athens, 27-28 June 1994

The conference on immigration, financed by the Observatory of Migratory Flows (DG I), enabled Eurostat to present a project for analysing the deep-rooted causes of immigration between the developing countries and the European Union. This project, with a budget of the order of ECU 1 million, should run for three years.

■ LABOUR FORCES

Budapest, 27-29 June 1994

Jointly organized by Eurostat and the OECD, this meeting concerned the harmonized labour-force surveys in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The discussions concerned the progress made by the countries in transition to a market economy towards implementing labour-force surveys. Existing surveys revealed considerable differences in samples and rotation. The presentations concerned the main characteristics of the European survey and planned developments therein for the future and the use of portable computers during interviews. They were led by a group of French, Spanish and British experts set up by Eurostat.

Several meetings of the same kind are planned for the future, and the initiative may be extended to the countries of the former Soviet Union.

■ POPULATION CENSUS

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 21 June-6 July 1994

Eurostat, along with some 40 experts from more than 20 EU and Central and East European countries, took part in the international observation of the population census carried out in the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

■ RWANDAN DRAMA

Kigali, July 1994

The Rwandan drama had direct implications for statistical cooperation with the developing countries, insofar as one of the two existing statistical training schools in Africa is located in Kigali. A rescue operation enabled teachers and students to be repatriated. A Eurostat delegation travelled to Abidjan to set up a training organization to avoid these students' losing a year. The mission also examined the possibility of receiving some of the students in Abidjan in 1994-95 and opening a second school in Dakar under the auspices of the ENEA.

■ CDIS — Steering Committee for Statistical Information

Brussels, 1 July 1994

An extraordinary plenary meeting of the CDIS examined the funding of the Commission's statistical requirements. The discussion concerned four priority areas for which Eurostat asked for co-financing from other Directorates-General:

- macroeconomic statistics;
- social and regional statistics;
- agricultural statistics;
- business statistics.

This action, supported by the Secretariat-General of the Commission, elicited great interest from the Directorates concerned.

GISCO

Geographical information system of the Commission of the European Communities The spatial dimension of the European statistical system

Economic, social and natural events and phenomena all have a spatial component. Indeed, it is one of the first ways of organizing statistical information. By linking up these features, GISCO, Eurostat's geographical information system, is able to present things in an extremely effective way!

NEARLY 30 YEARS IN EXISTENCE!

It was nearly 30 years ago that the first computerized cartography systems began to be developed. One of the pioneers in that era, Professor Howard Fisher, had just finalized the SYMAP program, which was used for a long time in a large number of computerized graphical applications, and William Warntz was extending research into theoretical geography (surface theory, macrogeography of social and economic phenomena, etc.).

What is a GIS?

A geographical information system (GIS) is an intelligent system which combines the latest information, digital processing and spatial analysis technologies to encode, store, process, update, analyse and present data by linking them with their geophysical location: geo—referenced representation.

A GIS must be able to answer several types of question:

- what is to be found at a certain place?
- where is such and such a data item or feature to be found?
- what changes have occurred in a particular place since a particular date?
- what type of spatial configuration is to be found in a particular place? (e.g. urban or rural fabric?)
- what if...? (measuring the effects of changing particular parameters at certain places using modelling, simulation, etc.).

Analysing these spatially-linked elements requires data on the underlying geographical or topographical situation, such as:

- delimitation of coastal areas and streams, rivers and inland waterways;
- relief and altitude;
- ground cover;
- road network;

- local infrastructure;
- administrative boundaries;
- etc.

Special computer tools are essential for managing information which has been geo-referenced in this way, enabling any user to produce a graphical visualization of his numerical data and highlighting links and combinations which might otherwise have passed unnoticed. The user will thus be managing simultaneously the geographical information and the spatial analysis.

A HAPPY COMBINATION!

The computer extends our intuition. Combining the facilities of image processing systems with those of geographical information systems will be promising for many statistical applications. The spatial dimension can be captured in full thanks to the combination of computer and statistical systems.

Obvious link with the statistical system

The GIS links geographical data with descriptive attributes (statistics) provided or collected by the NSIs. If a GIS is to operate properly, it is important that the attribute data are properly geo-referenced: a spatial code is required to link these attributes (discrete or continuous) to the particular regions or points to which they relate. In this way, it is possible to overcome a number of conceptual difficulties often confronting traditional statistics in the representation of data which are variable in time and space.

Geographical metadata

Until now, statistical data have been linked far too much to official reference grids: districts, towns, countries, regions. The new geographical information systems must be able to position this information in the perspective of 'physical space', which means matching up statistical information systems

(SIS) with GISs in both functional and technical terms. The future will see the creation of a series of new topographical and thematic products with a geographical component.

Important tasks for the statistician

The close links between statistics and spatial-analysis methods will oblige statisticians to pay more attention to new problems concerning geographical information and the rules for managing it. Precise rules will have to be defined for collecting, processing and disseminating spatial data.

Eurostat takes the view that it has to become involved in the process of standardizing and harmonizing geographical information, by dealing with applications in this field where the level of maturity is such that it is already attracting many users.

TO DO WHAT?

Regional policy

Interest in GISs is very marked at regional level. As power structures change, decentralize and move closer to the people, territorial or regional data have to be fully integrated into policy management.

At regional, and especially local, level, administrative boundaries are tending to change more easily than in the past. The need for a dynamic, computerized system able to update continually changes occurring in the various geographical elements grows as the level of detail of the information sought increases.

If the geographical classification systems do not match the way in which regional statistics are produced, the result will be overlapping nomenclatures and erroneous information. Geographical coding now has to be introduced into numerous administrative surveys.

Continual changes in space and time

A well-adapted GIS must enable a large number of continually variable data to be combined. Eurostat's extensive experience in managing changes to very considerable bodies of data (definitions, nomenclatures, etc.) is very useful here.

The pressure to obtain data at a more detailed level than national aggregates comes in large part from the increase in the number of regional initiatives taken by the Community.

As far as infra-regional level

As regards infra-regional statistics, an analysis of the spatial dimension enables results to be presented in the form of thematic maps at district level, readily shedding light on the following:

- population density;
- typology (urban/rural) and the degree of urbanization;
- eligibility for certain structural funds;
- commuting patterns;
- the infrastructure available to prospective new companies (problems of access to motorways, ports, airports, train stations, assessment of distances between these points, etc.)

Government departments will draw heavily on GISs in the preparation of many strategic decisions, be it on transport, development or security.

Agricultural policy

In this area, one of the main breakthroughs of GISs is the linking of satellite imagery and remote sensing techniques, and it is of considerable interest to the Commission; Eurostat is playing an active role, proposing specific projects and demonstrating the potential benefits of linking statistical systems and remote sensing techniques. The MARS programme (Monitoring agriculture by remote sensing), which is coordinated by the Joint Research Centre in close cooperation with Eurostat and DG VI, has also scheduled specific projects.

The links between statistics, remote sensing and geographical information are now clearly apparent. Remote sensing is thus a particularly attractive option for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which do not yet have a statistical system comparable to ours and where the structure of farms in particular is rapidly changing, which renders agricultural surveys difficult if not impracticable.

That is why Eurostat's programme plans to incorporate remote sensing as a new information tool to support the statistical system.

Environment

The fact that environmental issues were specifically introduced into the 1986 Single Act has put the Commission in a key position of using the existing framework to discuss, negotiate and possibly regulate environmental policy for the Twelve.

Eurostat found itself in the position of having very little time to link up its traditional socio-economic data with other data covering both short-term matters and ongoing variables for which the reference framework in terms of measurement had nothing to do with the traditional administrative boundaries.

Eurostat became all the more interested in GISs as a result of the sharp rise in environmental awareness in the Community countries, together with the obvious international aspect to the policies in this area. Considering the cross-border nature of the phenomena to be measured, the use of advanced information processing techniques linking geographical information and remote sensing systems will allow spatial information to be managed and used in numerous applications.

Remote sensing can already make a considerable contribution in the area of forest inventories.

Only a good geographical information system can enable the information coming from satellite remote sensing to be processed. With the full contribution from a methodically developed GIS, Eurostat will have a complete framework for meeting the new requirements of the European Environmental Agency, the advent of which has emphasized the need for comprehensive geo-referenced information for current and future Commission departments.

Rapid service according to requirements

By combining the various applications handled by GISCO, Eurostat will be able to offer a common basis for analysing and presenting environmental data or proposing estimates or specific studies on environmental conditions in the Community and the Member States.

Policy formulation

It will be easier to formulate policies (thanks in particular to the availability of preliminary approximations and an overview of environmental conditions in the Community).

Monitoring

The effects of Community and other policies on the environment will be able to be monitored more efficiently.

Modelling

Modelling of certain environmental impacts at national, European and even global level will be greatly facilitated.

Transport

GISs will provide missing information on transport facilities and infrastructures at regional or local levels, and enable accessibility to be modelled using networks' exact locations and processing all descriptive attributes. It will be possible to give a complete description of the accessibility of European regions by means of transport.

In addition, various forms of spatial analysis can be applied in the study of transport networks (particularly transport flows of dangerous substances) and pollution emissions in high-density population zones. These are only some of the many possible applications.

Extended areas of application

Geo-demography

Migratory phenomena can be located and their development monitored, not only in temporal but also in spatial terms.

Geo-management

This covers innumerable fields of application, ranging from climatic conditions, to commercial geographical information, housing, health, postal services, etc.

Geo-marketing

Provided that the spatial dimension for certain types of work is adequately defined, a GIS can present a coherent European perspective at a sufficiently detailed level for strategic decisions regarding the location of activities, markets, service infrastructures, etc.

EUROSTAT'S ROLE

Until recently there was a surprising lack of GIS-based services in Europe.

The Commission was in a good position to identify barriers to the utilization of this technology: problems of standardization, education, training and research, not forgetting the fact that the end-user was often unaware of the potential benefits of GISs.

Certain measures therefore had to be taken, and although its services were directed initially at other Commission departments, Eurostat now becomes involved where it is strongly in demand as central operator and coordinator.

The mandate

The task of Eurostat's GISCO department falls into several parts:

Introduction

Introducing the use of geographical information systems within the Statistical Office, and installing suitable technology in response to a long list of concrete requirements and requests.

Focal point

The GISCO department acts as a visible point of contact and reference within the Commission at the disposal of anyone who needs to process geo-referenced information at European Community level: information which has to be obtained, maintained, enhanced and disseminated.

Coordination

Systematic utilization requires a high level of coordination, not only in terms of the software used but particularly as regards the data processed. The fact that this facility will be used by a wide user group means that considerable management resources are required.

Development

Lastly, there is the development of a wide range of high value-added products combining geo-referenced and statistical information. These products will help to simplify and enhance the use of European statistics which aim continually to meet better user needs.

WITH THE NSIs

The information supplied by the NSIs is essentially socio-economic information. The new concerns under the Single Market for cohesion on regional matters, the environment and rural development, etc. mean that there has to be a better understanding of the spatial distribution of the elements or phenomena observed.

A large number of existing data in all the national statistical services are to be geo-referenced: all the basic, topographical data, which must eventually be linked up with the European statistical system, have enormous potential for development.

The interaction between economic and social factors is better highlighted when the geographical dimension can be visualized. In this respect the potential applications of GISs are virtually unlimited.

The NSIs will therefore be able to take into consideration the following, in cooperation with Eurostat:

- the 'spatialization' of the information which they manage;
- the need to adapt the new techniques to existing information systems and traditional procedures;
- the need to incorporate remote sensing and geographical information systems into statistical applications;
- the need to organize suitable training for their statisticians.

WITH THE NGIs

Whereas there is a European Statistical Office, there is no European Geographical Institute.

The result of this has been that Member States' national geographical institutes (NGIs) have retained practices which are sometimes quite different from those of others: differences in scale, content, symbols, selection procedure and coding, projection systems, etc.

Since in the future Eurostat will have to process geo-referenced statistics, it will have to work with the NGIs to establish a new network enabling it to obtain the information it has to collect.

This linking network, based extensively on partnership, will offer new opportunities to all those involved.

FOR THE COMMISSION AS A WHOLE

If it is to be used extensively in formulating policies, especially in finalizing new policies and monitoring existing ones, an information system must be much more than a collection of statistical or alphanumeric data: 'geographical dimensions' have to be added to indicate where certain problems exist, where they might crop up in the future and where the situation has been improved as a result of current policies.

Economic, social and natural events and phenomena all have a spatial component: the development of GISs means that all Community policies will be able to benefit from geo-referenced information for both descriptive and analytical purposes.

In all guidelines

The Commission therefore needs such a facility in order to manage better its guidelines and especially its priorities. Moreover, with the development of the European Economic Area and the Commission's involvement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it will be very easy for us to quantify and locate in geographical and cartographical terms the situation in all the regions and thus be in a position to enable the required assistance to be directed quickly to where it is needed. That is why Eurostat will be taking crucial measures to incorporate spatially-derived data into all the components of the European Statistical System.

Contact point

GISCO is therefore intended to be a point of contact for all GIS users, both for systems which exist or are under development.

For Commission departments

GISCO is also to be a point of contact for all those wishing to make use of new technological possibilities.

Outside the Commission

GISCO is also to be available and accessible to all interested parties with a suitable data-processing and organizational infrastructure.

THE DATA

The GISCO system offers, inter alia, the following data sets:

Topographical reference data

on:

- hydrography (coastlines, rivers, streams and inland waterways, lakes, drainage bassins);
- altimetry (digitalized models of elevation, contour lines);
- infrastructure (road and rail networks, ports, airports);
- administrative units (countries, regions,¹ infra-regional or local units).

Thematic data

on:

- earth resources (ground cover, composition, natural vegetation, climatic conditions);
- infra-regional themes (Community support frameworks, structural funds, development zones, degree of urbanization, dormitory zones, etc.);
- the environmental (atmospheric emissions, coastal erosion, etc.);
- industrial themes (situation of major industries, nuclear power stations, energy transport networks, etc.).

A more detailed description of the data available is contained in Eurostat's catalogue.

For more information

For further information please contact Mr R. Cubitt Database management, publications and geographical information system Jean Monnet Building B3/105 L-2920 Luxembourg (tel: (+352) 43 01-33088 fax (+352) 43 01-32594)

¹ according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS).

EUROPE, CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES AGREEMENT ON COMMON CLASSIFICATIONS

First official concordance

Europe, Canada and the United States have reached agreement and are publishing recommendations for common classifications of activities. For the first time it will thus be possible to compare the main features of their economies.



The publication by representatives of the European Union, Canada, the United States and the United Nations of a document outlining an official concordance designed to improve the understanding of economic data across national borders constitutes a major step forward in the compilation of common industrial classifications.

CONCORDANCE AT LAST

The document is entitled *The International Concordance between the Industrial Classifications of the United Nations, Canada, the European Union and the United States* and sets out the correspondence between the recently-revised classifications of the United Nations and the European Union — ISIC and NACE Rev.1 — in relation to the industrial classification systems used in the United States and Canada.

Comparison now possible

In the words of Mr Yves Franchet, Director-General of Eurostat, this publication will now make it possible, for the first time, for national and international users of

industrial statistics to compare the main features of the national economies of Europe, the United States and Canada.

Interpretation, similarities and differences

The publication highlights in particular:

- the precise interpretation of the content of each ISIC (Rev.3) class on the basis of the descriptions in ISIC (Rev.3), the Central Product Classification and the harmonized commodity description and coding system;
- similarities and differences between North America and the European Union in the interpretation of ISIC (Rev.3).

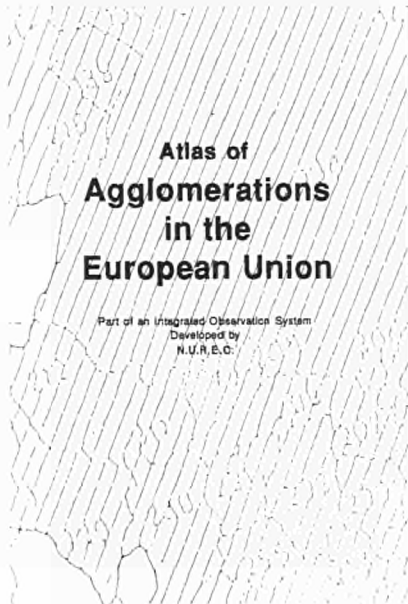
WHERE TO GET IT

Copies of *The International Concordance between the Industrial Classifications of the United Nations, Canada, the European Union and the United States* may be obtained by writing to Eurostat, Jean Monnet Building, L-2920 Luxembourg, or by calling (+352) 43 01-33410.

EU ATLAS OF AGGLOMERATIONS

Result of cooperation

Jointly financed by Eurostat, the NUREC *Atlas of agglomerations in the European Union* is a fine example of cooperation and partnership between administrative and academic authorities and the professional circles involved.



URBAN NAVIGATION

When the cartographer Mercator died 400 years ago, he left posterity a compendium of maps which provided tremendous help for navigators.

With modern advances in data collection and processing it is now possible, by combining the analysis of topographical maps with digitized geographical information, to produce not only an atlas of agglomerations in the European Union but also a matching database to make it easier to 'navigate' around urban entities.

By combining information from a detailed analysis of topographical maps drawn to scales permitting a high degree of accuracy with the smallest possible units of statistical value, and with basic administrative units such as boroughs, municipalities and districts, etc, NUREC has managed to produce detailed comparative information on agglomerations in the Twelve Member States of the European Union.

NUREC APPROACH

The Network on Urban Research in the European Union (formerly Community) was set up in Pisa in 1989. The members are cities and towns, academic establishments and other networks. The aim of NUREC is to support scientific progress in the field of comparative urban research, to develop a suitable common basis for the comparability of urban data in the EU and to encourage communication between institutions involved in urban research.

Right from the start, it became apparent to NUREC that there were differing notions in the European Union of what a 'town' was, as a result of concepts which had evolved over the centuries in accordance with different traditions, laws and political developments.

The three main types of concept were identified as:

- the town in the legal or administrative sense;
- the town in the morphological sense, defined as a continuous built-up area;
- the town in the functional sense, defined by daily commuting between home and work, population density, etc.

One of NUREC's main concerns from the start was to produce a database on towns in the European Union. This approach involved tackling first of all the problem of urban delimitation, starting with the collection of data based on the administrative and morphological definitions and leaving to a later stage the functional definition.

DIGITIZED GEOGRAPHY

The NUREC atlas and the Europolis database which resulted from this work offer politicians and the public and all those working in this sector comparable information on 330 agglomerations with more than 100 000 inhabitants and 8 220 basic administrative units covering the entire territory of the European Union.

These working aids contain data on population and area in agglomerations and surrounding areas.

NUREC agglomerations are compiled by projecting the network of basic administrative data over the network of continuous built-up areas. The NUREC atlas and the Europolis database show agglomerations as an aggregate of all the basic administrative data relating to actual built-up area. They also provide a complementary set of basic administrative data which do not cover the actual built-up area but which refer to immediately adjacent areas.

INTEGRATED OBSERVATION SYSTEM

The NUREC agglomerations were compiled according to UN definitions of continuous built-up areas, which state that buildings should be considered part of a built-up

area if they are less than 200 metres apart. In addition to this criterion, there are various other conditions for inclusion or non-inclusion. Using the NUTS classification (the Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Units devised by Eurostat), the integrated observation system comprising NUREC's Europolis database and its *Atlas of agglomerations in the European Union*, which Eurostat sponsored, offers a coding system which can be digitized and updated in order to adapt to the changes which are bound to occur.

Where to get it

The NUREC *Atlas of agglomerations in the European Union* is published in three volumes and may be purchased for ECU 300 from:

NUREC,
Administrative Directorate,
c/o Amt für Statistik, Stadtforschung und Europaangelegenheiten,
Stadt Duisburg,
Bismarckstrasse 150-158,
D-47049 Duisburg.
Fax (+49-203) 283 44 04.

PORTRAIT OF THE ISLANDS

A detailed description of the 440 or so inhabited islands of the European Union

Approximately 5% of the European Union's land area consists of islands: some are very close to coasts, others are far away on the open sea. For the first time, a publication will present them individually using maps, illustrations, statistical tables and commentary on the territory, the region's strengths and weaknesses, the population structure and trends, the labour market, the economy and the environment.



Some of these islands are tiny, with only a few residents, and do not even constitute an administrative unit in their own right. Others, such as Sicily, Sardinia or the Canaries, have more than a million inhabitants and enjoy a certain autonomy. Only two Member States, Belgium and Luxembourg, have no island territory.

In these island regions, which are both harsh and calming for both the inhabitant and the visitor, populations proud of their sense of belonging and their traditions are happy to welcome foreign visitors.

They want to be known, to move closer to the centre and participate fully in the new Europe, which is what this publication aims to achieve.

PRESENTATION

Like *Portrait of the regions*, *Portrait of the islands* presents, in a standardized way for each Member State, a complete list of the islands with maps and statistics and a description of the island regions at NUTS 2 level (for example, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica and the Azores) over six pages with details of:

- geographical characteristics;
- strengths and weaknesses;
- population structure and trends;
- the labour market;
- the structure of the economy;

- the environmental situation.

Each island at NUTS 3 level (for example, the Isle of Wight and Bornholm) is presented over two pages.

There is also a brief analysis of the territory and the socio-economic situation of all the other islands.

IN PARTNERSHIP

This publication was produced in partnership between, on the one hand, several Commission departments (Directorate-General for Regional Policies, the Translation Service, the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities and Eurostat) and, on the other, the national statistical institutes of the Member States, which, in many cases, drew on the services of their regional departments and other ministries.

How to order

The cartographical section preceding each chapter will be of particular interest to the reader.

This publication of around 200 pages in four-colour, DIN A4 format is available in English, French and German, costs ECU 30 and may be obtained from sales outlets of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, the addresses of which can be found on the inside back cover.

R REGIONALIZATION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS

Seminar in Coimbra, Portugal
September 1994

CONTEXT

One of the objectives of the Community's Statistical Programme for 1993 to 1997 is to define, implement and assess a statistical system able to provide assistance in determining regional policies. The introduction of a common layout for drawing up central government regional accounts is one of the projects in the Programme and is scheduled for 1995.

Harmonization continues

First of all, a number of methodological questions have to be resolved: they concern both how certain ESA rules are interpreted at regional level and the nature of the layout to be adopted.

Those Member States which already draw up this type of accounts do so according to layouts which are not always shared by others. The scheduled harmonization project will consequently re-

quire a level of preparation which will probably be greater than that previously required for regional accounts by industry and for the households sector. That is why it was decided that, to begin with, central government accounts would not be included in the regional chapter of the ESA.

Despite these difficulties, Eurostat hopes in the future to flesh out a common layout for central government regional accounts. Several studies have already been completed in various Member States, and this preparatory phase will be concluded by a study on Germany, which is currently nearing completion. Eurostat takes the view that these analyses should form the starting point for drawing up a common layout.

OBJECTIVES

In order to organize this preparatory work in a systematic way, a seminar on the subject will be

held in Coimbra, Portugal at the end of September 1994 with the aim of bringing together a group of experts and users of central government regional accounts so that they can try to take stock of the methodological points to be considered before a common Community layout is established.

To this end, Member States are invited to present their methods for joint analysis aimed at highlighting the various aspects of the options used in interpreting the ESA rules at regional level, the utility of these accounts and the available statistical sources, etc.

To find out more

Those interested should contact Mr Baigorri (Tel. (+352) 43 01-32577) at Eurostat (Directorate E: Social and regional statistics and structural plans — Unit: Regional accounts and indicators, and structural plans).

THE STATISTICAL CONCEPT OF THE TOWN IN EUROPE

A reference work

Any statistical consideration of the urban phenomenon is of necessity founded on one or more notions of what constitutes a town. For certain authorities, the legal status is the mark of a town. For others, it is the economic function. This publication reviews the current statistical concepts which are officially used in the Member States of the European Union.¹



THE STATISTICAL CONCEPT
OF THE TOWN IN EUROPE



DEFINITIONS

A statistical definition of the concept of 'town' is needed. This is covered in the first part of the publication: a description of how, depending on the nature and history of the urban population and their political and administrative structures for land use control, the countries of Europe and their statistical administrations have defined various sets of rules to define the notion of 'town' at different points in time.

Technical annexes explain the steps taken to consolidate the definitions. Comparisons are facilitated by the presentation, since the same plan is used for all countries.

Rapprochement

Summaries indicate where rapprochement between the various statistical systems is feasible, distinguishing a limited number of general principles and the variations in detail of the measurements and expressions to which they give rise.

The authors then endeavour to describe earlier work which sought a common definition. Comparisons are used to outline recommendations to harmonize the statistical concept of the town in Europe.

THE FOUR PRINCIPAL CONCEPTS

The immense variety of forms of urban area has been encapsulated in the various countries for a fairly small number of concepts, for which a name from the world of physical sciences — attractors — could be taken, since they have crystallized the various types of statistical description of spatial forms, from which comparisons may be made and questions of differing types answered.

There are four statistical descriptors for the concept of town:

- urban localities, defined by the town's administrative boundaries or by its status in law;
- urban agglomerations or urban units, which embrace continuously-built urban centres forming either part of one administrative unit or a group of several;
- urban regions, comprising a nucleus town and its sphere of influence or employment catchment area, which are frequently defined in terms of commuting;
- polynuclear urban regions, or conurbations, which may be continuously-built but comprise a number of centres polarizing human dealings; they are frequently the product of a number of urban agglomerations or regions which, though initially separate, have become merged as a result of their geographical spread.

Need for comparability

The authors note that the present situation is one of considerable diversity in the definitions used by the Community countries, although there are some areas of convergence. The rural/urban split is founded on criteria which differ slightly from one country to another (although they no doubt reflect the reality of each) and the cumulative results are not always comparable. Definitions of urban units and regions do not exist in every country, and the lack of harmonization in the definitions means that no serious international comparisons of towns and cities can be made.

This does not mean — the authors go on — that harmonization is impossible, particularly if it is understood that 'harmonization' should be taken as meaning 'meeting and having the same meaning as a clearly-identified definition' without there necessarily being a perfect match with every criterion in the definition but with criteria which, adapted to local realities, are capable of producing broadly comparable results.

FROM THE RURAL TO THE URBAN

In the absence of a clear boundary between the rural and the urban, a number of countries have added intermediate categories which adopt a hierarchical structure of population density: basic administrative units are thus classified from 'profoundly rural' to 'urban', including intermediate semi-rural and semi-urban categories. The criteria employed usually combine the population concentrated in the area, and the location, and may also include more complex data of a morphological, socio-economic or functional nature (appearance of building, characteristics of active population, place of residence/place of work).

Encouraging factors

The inventory of statistical approaches to the fact of urbanism in the Community countries reveals a number of encouraging factors.

The statistical sources allowing the drawing of boundaries to urban areas are more copious than might have been expected, and a number of countries already possess the means — sometimes differing, sometimes complementary — to identify the urban phenomenon in all its various forms and as it progresses. Lastly, the concepts which underlie the definition of statistical urban units are relatively few in number and fairly comparable in spirit, despite the extraordinary variety of parameters identifying them and despite the substantial differences between the ways in which the territory is perceived and represented at local level.

PROPOSALS

Part Two of the report contains a series of proposals in the form of recommendations which may be used as a guide in the definition of common statistical concepts used to define and map urban areas. They draw on the concepts and skills already used by producers of statistics and reflect the needs of various types of user. They take account of the cost of producing data, of compatibility with other statistical systems, of the possibilities of long-term time series, and of the stability over

time and on the ground of the concepts and of the geographical entities they define. The proposals aim at a globally coherent statistical method at European level.

Further information

The report (catalogue No CA-70-91-758-EN-C) costs ECU 12 and may be ordered from sales outlets of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, the addresses of which can be found on the inside back cover.

¹ Although published in 1992, the report is still highly topical. It was produced for Eurostat by the Institut National d'Études Démographiques (Denise Pumain), Equipe PARIS-CNRS (Thérèse Saint-Julien, Nadine Cattan and Céline Rozenblat) and NUREC (Network for Urban Research in the European Community).

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