



Economic and Social Council

CES/803
25 January 1994

Original: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Conference of European Statisticians

Forty-second session
(Paris, 13-17 June 1994)

TASK FORCE ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING

Note prepared by the secretariat

1. The 1993 session of the Task Force on Physical Environmental Accounting was held as planned. It was attended by France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the Commission of the European Communities (Eurostat). The session was organized in separate meetings of the two pilot groups (dealing with land use/land cover and nutrients in the environment, respectively) on 6 December, preceding the plenary session on 7 December. The meetings on 6 December permitted to outline the approaches followed by each of the pilot groups, including the distribution of work between the participating countries. The plenary session was devoted to the alignment on the two plans of the pilot groups on a comparable approach, and to the specification of deadlines for the reaching of intermediate results in the project. The deadlines were fixed in such a way that the target of submitting a report from the Task Force to the 1995 plenary session of the Conference can be maintained.

2. The conclusions reached by the Task Force meeting are annexed to this note.

ANNEX

**Conclusions reached at the meeting of the
CES Task Force on Physical Environmental Accounting**

(Geneva, 6-7 December 1993)

1. The Task Force considered both substantive and organizational aspects of its work. The underlying assumption for both discussions was that their results may have to be amended, and will under all circumstances be refined in the course of future work.

Substantive issues

2. The meeting permitted a broad scheme for the accounting framework to be developed that can be followed by each pilot group in its future work. As a consequence, a distinction will be made between "core accounts" and "supplementary accounts", although the interdependencies between the two types of accounts will vary between the two pilot studies.

3. Each partner in the Task Force will make an attempt to compile data in accordance with the core accounts of the pilot study in which they participate. Irrespective of the success with which this phase of the work is completed, each partner will also prepare a detailed statement about the work undertaken, including the evaluation of the reasons for its result. Furthermore, all partners are encouraged to undertake the compilation of data with regard to some or all of the supplementary accounts.

4. The core accounts for the pilot study on land use/land cover relate to statistics on cover, use, and their related activities. The supplementary accounts in this pilot study will provide accounts for the following issues: sealing of soils, partitioning of surfaces, naturalness/artificiality of land cover, biodiversity in rural areas, and, subject to approval by Austria, impact of tourism.

5. The core accounts for the pilot study on nutrients in the environment relate to emissions and their generating activities, transboundary flows and to transport between environmental media of the relevant substances. The supplementary accounts will cover extractions, imports, exports, use, production and, if possible, environmental quality indicators that can be linked to the accounts.

6. The national contributions to the work of the pilot groups will make use of relevant national or international classifications. They need not be identical, provided that the linkage of the accounts to the respective core accounting scheme is ensured.

7. On the basis of these decisions, the Task Force agreed on the following broad structure for the report required for submission to the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians in 1995:

- A. Introduction: history of the project, relationship to other activities on environment-economic accounting at the international level
- B. Description of core and supplementary accounts, including their linkages and interdependencies in relation to environmental problems
- C. Numerical illustrations, by country, including their substantive interpretation
- D. Evaluation of the experience obtained during data work
- E. Lessons learned from the study with regard to the need for new, or the amendment of existing (CES) classifications in the field of environmental information
- F. Recommendation to the CES whether or not to launch a developmental project on physical environmental accounting

Organizational matters

8. The following detailed decisions were taken on the planning of further work:
- A model of the core accounting scheme for land use/land cover will be prepared by the French delegation for mailing to participants in the Pilot Group by 15 January, 1994. The core scheme may include an account that details changes in land cover in terms of net flows that can be attributed to economic activities on one hand and to natural processes on the other. The presentation will be sufficiently detailed in order for it to be understood also by the partners in the project who could not attend the meeting (Austria). In particular, it will include indications of accounting units, possible data sources and possible statistical classifications for use within the future data work.
 - The partners in the land use/land cover group planning to develop accounts on any or several supplementary accounts will develop their conceptual plans for their work in such a way that they can be linked to the core accounting scheme in an identifiable way. The detailed conceptual plan for the later data work will be communicated to the French project leaders at the earliest possible date, but not later than 31 March. At the same time, all members in the group will communicate their reactions to the model for the core accounts to the lead country. The national plans and comments will be circulated to all group members by the French project leaders. It is understood that deviations from the conceptual plans will be possible in the light of data peculiarities.
 - The data work to be undertaken within the Pilot Group on land use/land cover is scheduled for the period April 1994 to September 1994. At the end of September, the accounts compiled should become available to all members of the pilot group.

- The partners in the pilot study on nutrients in the environment will start immediate data work. It is expected that the existing accounting model will be adapted to national circumstances in the course of such work.
- The reports from each of the pilot groups may include (a) indications of what new classifications may be required, if the Conference of European Statisticians set out to develop a full-fledged physical accounting scheme of the environment; (b) indications of amendments that may be needed in the light of accounting of statistical classifications used in the work of the pilot group concerned; and (c) examples of substantive statements that are possible with the help of the illustrative data compiled in the course of the project.
- The Pilot Group on nutrients in the environment tentatively plans to hold a meeting in Voorburg on 11 April 1994. If necessary, the Pilot Group on land use/land cover will meet in spring 1994 in order to discuss any question that may arise in the meantime. A plenary meeting of the Task Force will be necessary in Geneva at the end of October or the beginning of November 1994. It will be preceded by separate meetings of the two pilot groups.
- In the light of the meeting of the Task Force next fall, the draft report will be finalized before the end of 1994. If necessary, a final consultation could be organized by correspondence in January and February 1995.

. . . .

It is recommended that the following text be included in the programme of work of the Conference:

3.5.2 (viii) Pilot study on a conceptual framework for physical environmental accounting (CES Priority A)

Objectives: Statistical research into conceptual questions of patrimony or resource accounting for primary use in statistical offices, over a period of two years, with the aim of determining the need for and feasibility of physical environmental accounting for structuring the field of environment statistics.

Activities and means: (i) Organization and implementation of the work within two pilot groups on changes of land use/land cover and nutrients in the environment, respectively (jointly by the countries participating in the pilot groups and the designated lead country); (ii) preparation of a report on the results of the work undertaken for submission to the plenary session in 1995 (by the countries participating in the Task Force with the assistance of the secretariat). Meeting of the Task Force (work session) in the fourth quarter of 1994 to consider the draft report of the Task Force.

Output delivery: Report of the work undertaken for submission to the 1995 plenary session.