

FOREWORD

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*Development of the European Statistical System within Eastern
Partnership – directions and strategy*

International Conference, 18-19 October 2011, Kraków, Poland

An international conference “Development of the European Statistical System within Eastern Partnership – directions and strategy” was held on 18-19 October 2011 in Kraków, Poland. It was organized by the Central Statistical Office of Poland in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as one of the central events of the Polish Presidency in the Council of the European Union, under the honorary patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister and the European Parliament.

The main goal of the conference was to discuss possible challenges to, and put forward the more advanced ideas for strategies of bringing the partners of EU Member States from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia closer to the European system of official statistics, and to develop a mechanism for maintaining the growing cooperation between the two groups of countries.

The vital importance of such an ambitious goal was emphasized by Professor Janusz Witkowski, President of the Central Statistical Office in his welcome speech; he has also forwarded greetings sent to the meeting participants by the highest officials of the Polish Government and of the European Parliament, while stressing the significance of the presence of EUROSTAT, represented by the Eurostat’s Deputy Director, Marie Bohatá, and of other international organizations.

Two groups of the papers have been presented during the meeting sessions. The first one comprises papers presented on behalf of the international organizations: EUROSTAT, The World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; the other consists of country presentations.

Involvement in extensive cooperation which aims at harmonisation of statistical methods, comparability of statistics and strengthening of state and cross-regional information systems between countries covered by the Eastern Partnership were the key aspects of speeches presented by representatives of international organizations. **Marie Bohatá** from Eurostat pointed to numerous activities carried out with the participation of Eurostat, which seek to build closer relationship with all European countries, among others, High-Level Seminars for 11 countries from Eastern European and Central Asian countries, which also

covers the project on Adapted Global Assessments supported by of EFTA and UN/ECE, short-term technical assistance missions, as well as seminars on subject matter areas and Twinning projects. Busan Action Plan for Statistics, a new initiative which aims to improve the statistical systems in developed and developing countries was discussed **Misha Belkindas** and **Frederic Vogel** from the World Bank, whereas the example of developing cross-regional information systems in the Geneva cross-border region was presented by **Gabriel Gamez** from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The development of statistical systems from country perspective, with the focus the important role that the European Union and international organizations such as UNECE, OECD, IMF and World Bank played in supporting these advancements, was highlighted in the presentations of representatives of statistical institutions from Russia, Georgia and Belarus. **Irina Zbarskaya** representing the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States described the processes of integration of the statistical systems of the Member States of the CIS. **Tengiz Tsekvava** of the State Statistical Office of Georgia, apart from stressing the impact of international cooperation on the development of potential of the Georgian statistics, spoke about the problem of outflow of skilled workers from the statistics because of low wages in the department. **Irina Kostevich** from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus presented the experiences and perspectives of statistical information system of the Republic of Belarus, with particular focus on creating a harmonized information system within the Eastern Partnership.

The issues of new challenges facing cross-border statistics were the central themes of presentations by **Marek Cierpiał-Wolan** from the Statistical Office in Rzeszow and **Stanislav Drapal** from the Czech Statistical Office. The former pointed to developing a coherent system of surveying cross-border areas and outlined Polish public statistics' experience in monitoring the socio-economic phenomena, whereas the latter one highlighted the important role of the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries.

Different approaches to problems associated with establishing a coherent information system of the Eastern Partnership were considered in the next group of papers. **Berit Olsson** from the Swedish Statistical Office focused on the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice as the ones of crucial importance to the public statistics quality. Professor **Józef Oleński** from the University of Warsaw presented novel concept of statistical parainformation platform used as a tool for exchanging information in order to provide their transparency - through the observance of standards and standardized methodology - by all the parties involved in the statistical processes. **Vasily Simchera** from the Russian Academy of Economic Science and Custom Union of the EurAsEC referred to challenges that lie ahead of the reliability of statistics, in particular, to imperfections in the functioning of European statistics, especially with regard to information at different levels of aggregation, and their consistency. **Rune Rafaelsen** from the Norwegian Barents Secretariat addressed the need to develop

an index for a number of cross-border regions in Europe that takes into account economic, social and cultural processes.

The presentations that were devoted to the directions of transformation of statistical systems in the Eastern Partnership countries and their harmonization with the European Statistical System were presented by representatives of Estonia, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Kazakhstan. **Priit Potisepp** from Statistics Estonia spoke about the process of centralization of Estonian official statistical system, updating the legal-institutional basis and implementing the statistical programme. **Oleksandr Osaulenko** from State Statistics Service of Ukraine discussed the main aspects of the National Statistical System Transformation Process and priorities of further development. **Lucia Spoiala** from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova elaborated on adherence of NBS to the European Statistics Code of Practice as well as on key problems associated with that. **Alikhan Smailov** from the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK) referred to activity and legal basis of the Agency.

In his closing speech, the President of CSO **Janusz Witkowski** expressed the hope that it was a kind of platform to exchange experiences and to present current issues of the statistical services of different countries. The President said that the contacts made during the conference will help in the future to better coordinate the necessary actions for moving towards the integration of the statistical systems of the Eastern Partnership members countries with of the European Statistical System.

Below is the Agenda of the conference:

Session 1: Official statistics as a dynamic form of cooperation between Eastern Partnership countries

Chair: **Lidia Bratanova** (UNECE Statistical Division)

1. **Misha Belkindas** and **Frederic A. Vogel** (World Bank) - "International Cooperation through Official Statistics on Food Security, the Environment, Climate Change and Poverty".
2. **Irina Zbarskaya** (Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States) - "Statistical system of the countries-members of the Commonwealth of Independent States – 20 years on the way to integration".
3. **Tengiz Tsekvava** (National Statistics Office of Georgia) - "International cooperation and capacity development in Geostat".

Session 2: Role of official statistics in establishing a coherent information system within the frame of Eastern Partnership

Chair: **Lars Thygesen** (Statistics Denmark)

1. **Berit Olsson** (Statistics Sweden) - "Quality in official statistics – using European Statistics Code of Practice".

2. **Irina Kostevich** (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus) - “Statistical information system of the Republic of Belarus – experience and perspectives”.
3. **Józef Oleński** (University of Warsaw, State High School of Technology and Economics in Jarosław, Poland) - “Statistical parainformation platform – foundation of information transparency in heterogeneous international environment (with special reference to the Eastern Partnership initiative)”.
4. **Vasily Simchera** (Russian Academy of Economic Science, Statistics Division of the EurAsEC Customs Union, Russia) - “Challenges to European statistics’ credibility – why European statistics is still not transparent and its credibility unsatisfactory”.

Session 3: Cooperation in the field of cross-border and euro-regional statistics

Chair : **Ms Irina Zbarskaya** (Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States)

1. **Marek Cierpiał-Wolan** (Regional Statistical Office in Rzeszów, Poland) - “Directions for development of transborder areas – state and prospects”.
2. **Semen Matkovskyy** (Main Statistical Office in L’viv Region, Ukraine) - „Cooperation within the cross-border and regional statistics”.
3. **Gabriel Gamez** (UNECE, Statistical Division) - “Strengthening regional cross-border information systems – the example of Geneva Cross-Border Region”.
4. **Rune Rafaelsen** (The Norwegian Barents Secretariat) - “Poland Border Dialogues. Developing a CBC Index for Europe”.
5. **Stanislav Drápal** (Czech Statistical Office) - “New challenges within cross-border statistics”.

Session 4: Transformation of statistical systems within the Eastern Partnership countries – towards harmonization with the European Statistical System – session organized by Eurostat.

Chair : **Mr Pieter Everaers** (Eurostat).

1. **Priit Potisepp** (Statistics Estonia) – “Transformation of EstSS to the ESS – main aspects and experiences”
2. **Oleksandr Osaulenko** (State Statistics Service of Ukraine) - “Experience and expectations from the European Neighbourhood Countries – the example of Ukraine”.
3. **Lucia Spoiala** (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova) - “Quality – a key element of development of official statistics”.
4. **Alikhan Smailov** (The Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Statistics) - “The integration of statistics of Kazakhstan with European Statistical System”.