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Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development  
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Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

**MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE  
ROMANIAN NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE**

Submitted by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania<sup>1</sup>

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD
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<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared by Dan Ghergut.

To speak about Sustainable Development is challenging, not only because the subject is so generous, but also for the simple reason that statisticians must first bring to light the results and to let them afterwards to talk for themselves.

In Romania, there is a real and visible interest for sustainable development. It comes from the undeniable aim to reduce the economic and social gaps, both internal and external. It brings together different stakeholders: central government, local authorities, academic media and research institutes, civil society or private sector as well. Unfortunately, I cannot tell if a comprehensive history of our concerns on this topic exists, to use it as reference. Therefore, I shall try to compile the events as they related to the NSI activities in different stages.

During the period covered by early 90's, the sustainable development, as a driving concept to streamline all the contributions for developing clear and effective strategies and programmes, was not the focal point. Due to objective reasons, the development concerns took the form of short and medium term strategies, centred on the transition period, the accession to European Union and promotion of informational society. In other words, one cannot say that there were not permanent efforts to shape the concepts, to give strategical orientation of the reforms and systemic transformation of Romania.

In 1999, a national strategy on sustainable development was approved by Government Decision. This strategy was the result of the efforts conducted in 1997 and 1998 by a task force grouped under the aegis of UNDP representative in Romania. In a broad sense, this strategy did not aim to set targets, but to draw the thematic of sustainable development in the context Romanian economy and society, assessing the environmental impact.

Romania concluded and published a national report to support the participation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development that took place in Johannesburg in 2002. This report gives a good picture of the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21.

In 2003, the Romanian presidency took the initiative to set the Commission for the Elaboration of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania (NSSDR), designed for the 2025 horizon. A further step was the national summit on the NSSDR organized in November 2004, which established in a clearer manner the guidelines for the sector strategies on sustainable development in Romania.

It was obvious from the very beginning that the sound approach of sustainable development is a difficult task and more complex than a issuing a principle, because it needs a wide consensus on scope, targets, actions, involvement and information. Coming to information, it is about collecting and processing a huge amount of quantitative information, from a large number of sources and sectors of economy.

As for the sector strategies, several contributions are worthwhile to be mentioned. Different ministries, responsible for IT&C, environment protection, agriculture and rural development, economy and energy, public finance, etc. devoted efforts to produce their own strategies. At the same time, public research institutes such as the Institute for Quality of Life Research, the Institute of Economic Research or the Demographic Research Centre "Vladimir Trebici" of Romanian Academy carried out projects with the same aim to give directions for sustainable development. However, sad to say, Romania does not have today a complete and agreed national strategy on sustainable development.

Needless to remind that, in these consecutive rounds, the National Institute for Statistics is the main data provider.

Nevertheless, the Romanian National Statistical Institute did not take a role just to prepare the required data, whenever was needed. We tried to tackle this issue on three dimensions: standardization, methodology and organization.

- **STANDARDIZATION**

As a first step, RNSI devised a comprehensive inventory of required and available statistical indicators, based on UN and Eurostat Sustainable Development Indicators.

Mirroring the Eurostat requirements, RNSI identified the available indicators, the institutions providing data, the length of time series, the periodicity and particularly the gaps in data series.

As a rule, in case of data provided by other institutions, RNSI concludes agreements that settle the obligations of both parties in terms of exchange of data.

Also as a rule, all the indicators are stored in a multidimensional database (TEMPO), which is available for dissemination. For the time being, this database has not a direct access for the public. This function will be added through a Phare National Programme, already operational. The database allows to group indicators under various themes of interest, including sustainable development.

- **METHODOLOGY**

Having the above-mentioned indicators as targets, RNSI periodically operates amendments on data collection programmes in order to secure the needed data sources. This is implemented either through the Annual Statistical Survey Programme, either through projects financed under Phare Programme.

For instance, within Phare National Programme 2001, the project “**Environment Statistics Surveys**” was appointed under the scope of compliance of Romanian environment statistics with European statistical system, seeking to ensure the provision of a stock of reliable and comprehensive statistical data in the environment field through:

- implementing the surveys on waste;
- implementing the surveys on water;
- creating of a statistical database for the national inventory on air emissions; and
- setting up the indicators with environmental reference, for evaluating sustainable development in Romania and its impact upon the economic and social life.

One of the publications presented the methodology, the results and the analysis of the results, included in the Statistical Study on Sustainable Development Indicators.

- **ORGANIZATION**

No action is effective without proper organization, bearing in mind that bringing together data can be accomplished with some efforts, but to internalize the required competence to focus on this subject proves to be more difficult. Moreover, between the ideal model and the actual situation is always a distance. In fact, the RNSI does not have a distinct unit to deal exclusively with the Sustainable Development issue, mainly for data analysis and specific studies.

Basically, the specialty statistical departments within the RNSI bear the responsibility to compile the required indicators. According to the internal procedure, the indicators are uploaded periodically in the TEMPO database. An expert team (very thin, unfortunately) within the Statistical Coordination Department has the responsibility to update the indicators list and the correspondent methodologies.

The information is available through the Intranet, giving the possibility almost the entire staff to consult the methodological resources, to check, for instance, the availability of indicators and to have, as much as possible, a picture of the internal and international events on different topics, including Sustainable Development.

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