

Working Paper No. 7
27 March 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development

First meeting

Luxembourg, 3-4 April 2006

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

EXPERIENCE OF IFEN-FRANCE IN THE MEASUREMENT OF SD
Submitted by the French Environment Institute

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD
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Working Group on Sustainable Development Statistics
First meeting, Luxembourg, 3-4 April 2006

Experience of IFEN-France in the measurement of SD

IFEN : the French Environment Institute

IFEN is a « department with responsibilities at national level » reporting directly to the Minister of Ecology and Sustainable Development. IFEN is charged with collecting, processing and disseminating scientific and statistical information on the environment. National focal point of the European Environment Agency, IFEN is also involved in work undertaken by EUROSTAT, OECD, the UN and in bilateral cooperation programmes.

IFEN is the rapporteur for the National Commission for Environmental Economics Accounts, chaired by the Minister in charge of environment.

IFEN (70 persons) is located in Orléans, France.

Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI)

Work on devising SDI began in France in 1997, on behalf of the Ministry in charge of Environment. Mandate was given to IFEN to coordinate the French participation to the testing process of the UN CSD indicators and to conduct methodological reflections. This work, drawing on discussions held with administrations, research institutes, NGOs, consultancies, conducted IFEN to propose a method to build up SDI. The idea was to translate the definition of SD of the Brundtland Report into quantified data (the main question was the “legacy to the future generations”), through an integrated framework (modular approach). The final outcomes, a list of 45 SDI put forward by Ifen as a contribution to the debate, was published in 2003.

In 2003, the French Government adopted a National SD Strategy. The Strategy calls for producing regularly a state of SD report based on indicators. A first list of National SDI was published in 2004. It was developed by an inter-ministerial working group, involving representatives of statistical and studies departments of the main ministries (incl. IFEN), the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), charged with statistical coordination of the process, and the civil society. As a starting point, the traditional “3 pillars” approach was preferred ; long time series, and coherence with EU indicators also guided the selection.

By mid 2006, the inter-ministerial working group intends to update the first list of National SDI. Learning from the first exercise and from the SDI Task Force experience, in order to provide a more integrated framework for SDI, the group identified 8 priority issues :

Resources for future growth, Social cohesion, ways of life and health, Climate change, Biodiversity and natural resources, Production and consumption patterns, Inter-generational equity, Good governance, Sustainable spatial planning.



Between 2002 and 2005, France (IFEN) took part in the Task Force on SDI led by Eurostat.

The Environmental Accounts as input for SDI

Expenditure accounts are the main “environmental accounts” developed in France. Elaborated within the SERIEE framework, they are prepared and published every year by IFEN.

IFEN is also developing physical accounts such as the Namea matrix (air, energy), and has recently undertaken a study in the area of Material Flow Accounts.

By linking the economic and environment dimensions, environmental accounts provide SDI. However, some limits are to be considered when using and interpreting them : for example, an increase of the environmental protection expenditure may be due to an increase of the amount of the pollution.

Thus, some methodological improvements are in progress :

- Developing a method sharing quantities and prices effects in order to analyse evolutions' causes,
- Developing a method sharing protecting vs. repairing expenditures
- Producing eco-efficiency indicators (coupling/decoupling) using the Namea Matrix for air emissions and energy, and in the next future for water and waste.

References and websites

- Ministry of Ecology of Sustainable Development : www.ecologie.gouv.fr
- IFEN : www.ifen.gouv.fr
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