

Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (IWGPS)
27th Meeting Minutes
Teleconference
August 10, 2017

Attendance

- Joachim Recktenwald (Eurostat)
- Jens Mehrhoff (Eurostat)
- Valentina Stoevska (ILO)
- Robert Dippelsman (IMF)
- Niall O’Hanlon (IMF)
- Margarida Martins (IMF)
- Peter van de Ven (OECD)
- Carsten Boldsen (UNECE)
- Nada Hamadeh (Chair, World Bank)
- Yuri Dikhanov (World Bank)
- Marko Rissanen (World Bank)
- William Vigil-Oliver (World Bank)

Agenda

- Progress in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) manual update
- Setting up a United Nations (UN) city group on real estate statistics
- Key messages from the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI-2) Global Conference

Agenda item 1: Progress in the CPI manual update

The IMF reported on the status of the CPI manual update. The chapter outlines have been shared and the authors are working towards finalizing the drafts by the end of September deadline. The chapters and annexes will undergo a review by primary reviewers. The list of primary reviewers is being finalized and will be circulated within two weeks. Final drafts should be available by end-December 2017.

The participants raised concerns that the timeline agreed by the Technical Expert Group (TEG-CPI) was ambitious and noted that the quality of the updated manual should be the main objective. It was also noted that the overall timeline remained to some extent unclear. The IMF concurred on the challenges related to the current timeline and agreed that it could be updated, if needed. However, it was suggested to keep the timeline unchanged for the time being, as changes at this stage might invite delays. The IMF also agreed to share a more detailed timeline with the IWGPS.

Regarding the review process, it was suggested that draft chapters and annexes, once available, could be circulated simultaneously for review by both the primary reviewers and the IWGPS. The IMF noted that, while this could be done, a comprehensive simultaneous review was challenging to manage from an operational perspective. Thus, it was agreed to maintain the two-stage review, first by the primary reviewers (which will include some IWGPS members) then by the IWGPS, unchanged. However, at the

first stage (TEG primary review), IWGPS members would have access to the chapters and may comment if they wish (in addition to review at the second stage). The IMF also agreed to provide the IWGPS members with the URL for the review website where draft chapters and annexes will be uploaded, when available.

The content of volume 2 of the manual was also discussed. It was agreed that, while the volume should include a research agenda that briefly describes the topics where more work and research would be useful, unresolved research issues should not be included in either volume as a recommendation or guideline. It was also noted that the authors' reply to the comments made by J. Mehrhoff on the E. Diewert/K. Fox paper were not circulated to IWGPS members. IMF proposed to recirculate them and remind authors of the objectives of this volume. Participants also agreed that the decision on whether to seek the United Nations Statistical Commission's (UNSC) adoption of volume 2 could be discussed in the future.

Conclusions and action points

- The overall timeline for the update will be kept unchanged for the time being; however, the IMF will circulate a more detailed timeline by end-August. The IMF will also ensure that the ambitious timeline will not jeopardize the quality of the updated manual.
- The TEG members will finalize the final list of primary reviewers by end-August and IMF secretariat will circulate. The draft chapters will be first reviewed by the primary reviewers (IWGPS members will be provided access for optional review at the same time), then the revised draft chapters will be shared with the IWGPS members for their review.
- The IMF will circulate the reply by E. Diewert/K. Fox to the comments by J. Mehrhoff. It was agreed that research findings should not be included in the volume.
- The IMF will provide the URL for the review website as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 2: Setting up a UN city group on real estate statistics

UNECE briefed the attendants on their discussion with the Director of the United Nations Statistical Division regarding the suggested new city group on real estate statistics. UNECE reported that the current number of city groups was rather high, and that the functioning of several existing groups would be discussed at the 2018 session of the UNSC. It was also noted that country support and leadership was required for creating a new city group. Participants concurred that a better time to formally discuss a new city group on real estate statistics could be at the 2019 session of the UNSC, preferably with a background paper from the IWGPS for the 2018 UNSC.

The ensuing discussion stressed that real estate statistics covered a broader range of statistics than real estate prices. Thus, existing price-focused groups such as the Ottawa Group were not well-positioned to cover this topic. Participants also emphasized that the group should focus on practical issues, rather than theoretical issues, relating to producing real estate statistics. It was suggested that, for the time being, at least one event could be organized to discuss real estate statistics. Eurostat is preparing the organization of an international conference on the topic in early 2019. The conference would be global in terms of attendance and would be open for the participation of several developing countries. It would also link up to activities in the context of the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative.

Conclusions and action points

- The possibility of forming a new city group on real estate statistics will be examined after the 2018 session of the UNSC, which will discuss the current standing city groups. Preliminary discussions with countries on establishing this city group can be initiated.
- Eurostat will organize an international conference on real estate statistics in early 2019.

Agenda item 3: Key messages from the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI-2) Global Conference

The key messages and agreements from the recent G-20 DGI-2 Global Conference were briefly discussed, especial in regards to the Residential Property Price Indices (RPPIs) and Commercial Property Price Indices (CPPIs). It was noted that a thematic workshop on RPPIs/CPPIs would be held in January 2018 in Buenos Aires, in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina (INDEC). BIS, Eurostat, OECD and IMF are taking the lead in organizing the thematic workshop. It was also noted that thematic workshops were a preferred format for technical discussions facilitating the implementation of the DGI-2 agenda, as well as for statistical-capacity-building in general.

Eurostat informed that it was in the process of finalizing the working paper on CPPIs (see DGI-2 Recommendation 18 on CPPIs), which will be published in early 2018. It was suggested that Eurostat presents the paper at the upcoming thematic workshop in Argentina. It was also stressed that additional methodological work on CPPIs was still needed and an action plan still needs to be elaborated. BIS, Eurostat, OECD and IMF will be discussing the preparation of the thematic workshop in late August 2017. It was suggested that they could use the opportunity to initiate the discussion on the next steps for developing an action plan on CPPIs.

Conclusions and action points

- Eurostat will finalize its working paper on CPPIs in early 2018. They will consider presenting it at the thematic workshop on RPPIs/CPPIs, which will be held in January 2018 in Argentina. BIS, Eurostat, OECD and IMF are taking the lead in organizing the thematic workshop.
- BIS, Eurostat, OECD and IMF will be discussing the preparation of the thematic workshop in late August 2017. They could use the opportunity to initiate the discussion on the next steps for developing an action plan on CPPIs.