



**MINUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON PROGRAM
INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION GROUP MEETING**

October 12-14, 2021

Virtual meeting

Welcome and meeting objectives

A meeting of the International Comparison Program (ICP) Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IACG) was held on October 12 to 14, 2021, virtually, via a videoconference hosted by the World Bank.

The main objectives of the meeting were to discuss i) regional updates; ii) global updates; and iii) preparations for the ICP Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting. The meeting participants are listed in Annex 2. The meeting presentations are available [here](#).

Nada Hamadeh, ICP Global Lead, World Bank, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees and highlighting the importance of assessing the status of the ICP in each region both for the preparation of the annual report to the 53rd Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and to inform the TAG of the most recent developments. Marko Rissanen, World Bank, welcomed the new regional members attending the IACG meeting for the first time: Ernestina Perez and Lady Infante, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC); Lars Svennebye and Mihai Iulian Gheorghe, Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and Daniel Sanchez Serra, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Session 01: Regional Updates

The ICP Regional Implementing Agencies (RIAs)—Gregoire Mboya Deloubassou, African Development Bank (AfDB); Kaushal Joshi, Asian Development Bank (ADB); Andrey Kosarev, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT); Claudia de Camino, Ernestina Perez, and Lady Infante, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC); Majed Skaini, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA); Hakan Linden, Lars Svennebye, and Mihai Iulian Gheorghe, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat); and Daniel Sanchez Serra and Sophie Bournot, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) —briefed the meeting on their respective ICP 2021 cycle activities.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Andrey Kosarev presented the status of the ICP 2021 cycle in the CIS region. Regarding country participation in the ICP 2021 cycle, CIS-STAT informed the IACG that Uzbekistan is officially participating in this cycle, in addition to the eight economies that participated in the 2017 cycle. In addition, CIS-STAT supports Turkmenistan's potential participation. Household consumption price surveys have started in Q1 2021 and are ongoing. For machinery and equipment surveys, prices were collected in 2021 and are scheduled to be submitted by the end of November 2021. For non-market services and housing volume, the respective questionnaires and guidelines are being prepared for sharing with the national statistical offices (NSOs) by March 2022. The updated questionnaire and guidelines for GDP disaggregation by basic headings will be provided to the NSOs by May 2022.

With regards survey planning and validation work, CIS-STAT has organized bilateral meetings with the NSOs of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Additionally, a validation workshop will take place in December 2021 with the participation of all CIS NSOs. Regarding outreach activities, CIS-STAT released the "Statistical Compendium on Global ICP results" in July 2020 and published the revised 2017 CIS ICP results in June 2021. In addition, CIS-Stat is translating into Russian the two new ICP guides: "Guide to the Compilation of Subnational Purchasing Power Parities" and "Guide to the Integration of Consumer Price Index (CPI) and International Comparison Program (ICP) Production Activities". Lastly, CIS-STAT has furthered their cooperation with the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, by taking the initiative to organize a data collection exercise with HSE students.

Asia and Pacific

Kaushal Joshi presented the status of the ICP 2021 cycle in the Asia and the Pacific region. In the ICP 2021 cycle 22 economies, the same as in the ICP 2017 cycle, signed a letter of no objection for participation. However, the participation status of selected economies varies. The price surveys for households started in the first quarter of 2021 in more than half of the participating economies. While a few economies are yet to start surveys due to COVID-19 and other constraints, for economies starting late, the survey schedule will be extended to cover a 12-month cycle. Prices will be extrapolated/backcasted for the reference year 2021, as needed. Surveys for machinery and equipment, construction, and housing rental are ongoing in most of the participating economies. ADB has been using several software tools to assist NSOs with data management and validation, unit price conversions, and price extrapolation. Since April 2021, ADB has organized three bilateral workshops, five regional workshops, one small group meeting, and a knowledge sharing activity with UN-ECLAC. ADB is planning another four regional workshops dedicated to price validation before the end of 2021.

ADB assessed the risks for the ICP 2021 cycle, noting the delays in commencing the price surveys in many economies due to COVID-19 and the need to obtain reliable indicators for extrapolating and backcasting price data. Other challenges include lockdown restrictions, which have led to a lower number of price quotations, and the constraint on resources due to budget cuts and competing priorities. In order to address these issues, ADB is conducting additional bilateral meetings to ensure full participation, emphasizing rigorous data validation, collection of additional metadata, and allowing price surveys to be extended to 2022, as needed.

Africa

Gregoire Mboya Deloubassou presented the status of the ICP 2021 cycle in the Africa region. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the ICP 2021 price collection in several ways, from technical challenges to staff shortages and the increased volatility in prices and availability of certain goods and services. AfDB has sought to mitigate these issues by collecting ICP items which are also available from the national consumer prices indexes (CPIs). The price collection for the remaining ICP items for all surveys is expected to be carried out in Q4 2021 and price collection for the household consumption survey will be extended until 2022. Regarding country participation, all 50 countries from the ICP 2017 cycle are participating in the ICP 2021 cycle, with Somalia and South Sudan also participating on an experimental level.

AfDB has continued to provide bilateral assistance throughout 2021 to participating economies. For 2022 the AfDB has planned two online workshops and to conduct data validation from October 2021 when the first data submissions are expected. The computation of regional PPPs is planned to commence in June 2022 up to the final Regional Report in 2023. In its assessment of operational risks, AfDB signaled the lack of funding for middle income countries as a possible reason for the delays in price collection for these countries.

Western Asia

Majed Skaini presented the status of the ICP 2021 cycle in the Western Asia region. Regarding country participation, Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia are participating in the ICP 2021 cycle, in addition to the 12 participating economies from the previous cycle. The participation of Yemen in ICP 2021 is not confirmed at the moment. During 2021, UN-ESCWA has conducted three regional workshops and one bilateral meeting with Lebanon. Furthermore, UN-ESCWA will release new regional PPPs on October 2021, including preliminary PPP estimates for 2020, forecasts for 2021 PPPs, revised 2018 and 2019 PPPs, and estimates of Lebanon PPPs for the years 2017 to 2021.

Regarding the challenges faced in the implementation of the ICP 2021 cycle, UN-ESCWA noted the delays in budget approvals, shortages of staff in UN-ESCWA, and new staff in national implementing agencies (NIAs) as some of the main difficulties. The gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) surveys were particularly demanding in this context due to their complexity. Additional funding for the 2021 ICP cycle is also a concern, and to mitigate this issue UN-ESCWA is applying for partial funding from the United Nations Development Account.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Claudia de Camino and Lady Infante presented the status of the ICP 2021 cycle in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. For the ICP 2021 cycle there are around 33 participating economies: Guatemala joined the exercise, while participation of the Bahamas, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, and Sint Maarten is at risk. Price collection for the household consumption survey had started in 2019 but was interrupted due to the COVID-19-related postponement of the ICP cycle. Price collection activities restarted in 2021 and UN-ECLAC is currently evaluating the use of the data collected in 2019 and 2020 for the ICP 2021 cycle with a first exercise for Q1 2021 using a combination of price data from 2019, 2020 and 2021. The price analysis process was presented including data cleaning, extrapolation of data from previous periods. and

intra- and inter-country validation in close collaboration with national specialists. Regarding operational activities, UN-ECLAC has organized several technical meetings and workshops throughout 2021, including a price validation workshop.

With respect to risk assessment, UN-ECLAC identifies financial and human resources constraints, the response to COVID-19 in the form of lockdowns and mobility restrictions, the census round in the Caribbean Region, which demanded additional resources from the NSOs, and natural disasters such as the August 2021 earthquake which hit the Caribbean Region.

Eurostat–OECD PPP Program

Håkan Linden and Sophie Bournot presented the status of the Eurostat-OECD PPP Program. The participating economies in the ICP 2021 cycle remain the same as in the previous ICP cycle, including Georgia and Ukraine. With respect to price surveys, the price collection period for consumer goods and services ran for three years, from 2020 to 2022, following the Eurostat-OECD PPP Programme’s rolling survey schedule. For the machinery and equipment survey prices were collected in 2021 for European countries and in 2020 for non-European countries and data are ready for submission. For the construction survey, some countries collected prices in 2020 but the majority collected prices in 2021 and data are also ready for submission.

Concerning the main challenges, the survey for consumer services was carried out in 2020, in a period where many countries had lockdown restrictions, but the other price surveys were conducted regularly. On other operational activities since the last IACG, Eurostat and OECD have both organized country meetings and one joint workshop to discuss best practices and recent developments of the ICP.

Agreements and conclusions

- Data collections are ongoing in all regions and generally according to the planned schedule. However, there are some cases of delays, resulting in a need for flexibility to continue price surveys into 2022 to facilitate the maximum participation of economies. Regional workshops and meetings, as well as virtual bilateral technical assistance missions, are being conducted in all regions.
- Among the main difficulties faced by NSOs are financial and human resource constraints. Additionally, price and expenditure data collection and compilation are more challenging due to pandemic-related restrictions, differing collection schedules, and changing patterns of expenditure.
- Several regions have collected price data in 2020 and are also planning to collect in 2022. These prices will be extrapolated or backcasted to the reference year 2021. This approach will be necessary to obtain sufficient coverage to calculate annual average prices.

Session 02: Global Updates

The ICP Global Office presented global updates. The overall ICP 2021 cycle timetable for governance and production activities cycle were reintroduced. On governance, it was noted that a TAG meeting will be held in November 2021, after the IACG meeting, to discuss the implications to the ICP in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. On production activities, the extension of the price collection period to Q3 and Q4 2022 was discussed, as well as the data for the first data submission on Q4 2021.

Regarding governance activities, it was noted that in April 2021 the Governing Board had convened to discuss the implementation of the ICP 2021 cycle, nominate new TAG members, and review the ICP Governance Framework. The Governing Board elected Finland and South Africa as its co-chairs, and the co-chairs are reaching out to countries whose participation is at risk. In May 2021, the TAG convened to discuss the ICP 2017 results and their impact, and to review the progress made on several ICP research agenda items. The TAG decided to convene again in November, to assess the status of the ICP 2021 cycle and the research agenda items in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, it was noted that the 53rd UNSC Session is scheduled for March 2022, where the status of the ICP 2021 cycle will be discussed. The session will provide an opportunity to encourage stakeholders on their commitment to ICP activities.

Concerning operational activities, RIAs were reminded of the corrections to the operational materials and the objectives of the data submission form, namely, submission of ICP 2021 benchmark data, ICP 2017 revised benchmark data, annual “non-benchmark” 2017-2021 data, including market exchange rates and mid-year population, and selected metadata. It was emphasized that the reference point for market exchange rates is the annual rates, in line with average prices and national accounts expenditures. It was noted that the ICP 2021 submission form had been updated to reflect changes in the country participation, global and regional item lists, and the temporal coverage from 2017 to 2021. RIAs were asked to review this form and ensure all changes were implemented correctly.

On metadata questionnaires, it was noted that a new “ICP COVID-19 Metadata Questionnaire” was proposed. This additional questionnaire would focus solely on any possible changes in ICP implementation due to COVID-19. RIAs were asked if the “ICP COVID-19 Metadata Questionnaire” should be merged with the “Household Consumption Survey Framework Questionnaire”, if there should be a section to identify the extrapolation or backcasting of price data, and if there should be a section to identify the price collection period for non-household surveys. These suggestions were agreed upon, while the RIAs will also share the results of their regional surveys regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on ICP data collection, as available.

Furthermore, it was noted that the two ICP COVID-19 Guidance Notes, on price and expenditure data requirements, were circulated to the countries and the documents are planned to be updated by incorporating additional recommendations and findings.

On knowledge and outreach activities, the main highlights were the release of the visual guide “PPPs for policy making: a visual guide to using data from the ICP” in June 2021, and the virtual presentation on the guide to the UN World Data Forum in October 2021.

The forthcoming global advocacy activities include a blog submission to the United Nations (UN) World Data Forum, pending approval by the UN; a World Bank Brown Bag Lunch (BBL) seminar; and the World Development Indicators (WDI) data story.

Lastly, the two publications from the Task Force on Country Operations on Guidelines on CPI-ICP integration and subnational PPPs were released in July 2021 and are available for download.

Agreements and conclusions

- The first data submission for the ICP 2021 cycle is scheduled for Q4 2021, covering all available data to date, including revised 2017 data, any available 2021 data, and timeseries data for 2018-2020. The first submission provides an opportunity of testing the technical aspects of submitting and storing data files from the RIAs to the Global Office, as well as initiating validation and assessment of the ICP 2021 cycle data. The ICP Global Office will circulate the finalized Data Submission Form to RIAs.
- The “ICP COVID-19 Metadata Questionnaire” will be integrated within the “Household Consumption Survey Framework Questionnaire”. This will both avoid duplication of work for the NIAs and facilitate future consultations. Additional questions on data collected outside the reference year and non-household surveys will also be added. The revised form will be submitted to RIAs for review and feedback.
- The two ICP COVID-19 Guidance Notes are planned to be updated by incorporating additional recommendations and findings. The ICP Global Office will contact RIAs for inputs, as appropriate.

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

DAY 1: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021

08:00 – 08:10 am **Opening remarks**

08:10 – 10:00 am **Regional updates on the ICP 2021 cycle implementation:**

Updates on country participation; Survey implementation status; Recent workshops and meetings; Outreach activities and releases; Risk assessment; and any other updates.

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2021

08:00 – 10:00 am **Regional updates on the ICP 2021 cycle implementation:**

Updates on country participation; Survey implementation status; Recent workshops and meetings; Outreach activities and releases; Risk assessment; and any other updates.

DAY 3: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021

08:00 – 09:50 am **Global updates on the ICP 2021 cycle implementation**

ICP 2021 timetable; Governance activities; Operational activities; Knowledge and Outreach activities; and Risk assessment.

09:50 – 10:00 am **Preparations for the November Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting**

Annex 2: List of participants

African Development Bank (AfDB)

- Ben Paul Mungyereza
- Gregoire Mboya Deloubassou
- Michel Mouyelo-Katoula

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Kaushal Joshi
- Criselda H. De Dios

Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT)

- Andrey Kosarev
- Valerica Accibas

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

- Daniel Sanchez Serra
- Sophie Bournot

Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat)

- Hakan Linden
- Eleonora Dumitrascu
- Kees Simonis
- Lars Svennebye
- Mihai Iulian Gheorghe

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC)

- Claudia de Camino
- Ernestina Perez
- Lady Infante

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)

- Majed Skaini

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- Brian Graf

World Bank

- Nada Hamadeh
- Marko Rissanen
- Edie Purdie
- Inyoung Song
- Maurice Nsabimana
- Mizuki Yamanaka
- Nancy Kebe
- Rui Costa
- Yan Bai

– Yuri Dikhanov