



TOGETHER
for a sustainable future

OCCASION

This publication has been made available to the public on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.



TOGETHER
for a sustainable future

DISCLAIMER

This document has been produced without formal United Nations editing. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries, or its economic system or degree of development. Designations such as “developed”, “industrialized” and “developing” are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. Mention of firm names or commercial products does not constitute an endorsement by UNIDO.

FAIR USE POLICY

Any part of this publication may be quoted and referenced for educational and research purposes without additional permission from UNIDO. However, those who make use of quoting and referencing this publication are requested to follow the Fair Use Policy of giving due credit to UNIDO.

CONTACT

Please contact publications@unido.org for further information concerning UNIDO publications.

For more information about UNIDO, please visit us at www.unido.org

21409

Distr.
RESTRICTED

IRD/R.10
21 December 1995

UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Regional Workshop on Industrial and Business Information
Services in Central and Eastern Europe
Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 14-15 November 1995

REPORT*

* This document has not been edited.

V.95 60478

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Central and Eastern European countries as well as countries of the FSU are presently undergoing radical political, economical, cultural and social changes. These changes affect industrial enterprises, agriculture, scientific and educational institutions, all parts of the society.

The transformation to market economy goes hand in hand with privatization and this closely relates to formation of small and medium enterprises. The successful start and further performance of these depends largely on supply of information. Having this in view, the technical assistance to information centres that would help to bridge the present transition period of transformation from centrally planned economy to market one, would represent a very significant support to the process of privatization, to small- and medium sized enterprises and to the success of the entire economic reform in Central- and East European countries.

No doubt that in the past many fine and worldwide recognized libraries and information centres have been established and developed in these countries. The services of these centres have been, however, primarily focused on needs of scientists, researchers and university students. There were no information services for entrepreneurs, simply because there were hardly any in these countries and consequently there was no need for such services.

Because of this, the present information services for SMEs are far from being sufficient, while the undergoing transition to market economy calls for efficient supply of latest information on products, raw materials, technologies, market, prices, potential partners, suppliers, laws, regulations, domestic and foreign companies, directories, standards, i.e., a broad range of essential information that we might simply call *business information*.

Moreover, the disintegration of the COMECON and its institutions has, inter-alia, seriously affected coordination and cooperation in the field of development of data banks, information services, information networks and each country has started to design its own information system without knowing what is going on in the neighbouring country, without realizing that some efforts, activities might be duplicated.

This situation has started to present a serious impediment for the transition process of the economy, for the foreign investment and for the development of SMEs for which the availability of the latest business and industrial information and information services is vital.

UNIDO had realized the danger of absence of coordination activities within the region and has convened a workshop of information specialists from sixteen countries in Budapest. The participants of the workshop had welcomed UNIDO's proposal to develop a regional information system that would provide efficient, updated information services to SMEs and have strongly recommended to start development of the system without any delay. The work title of the system is IBIS (Instant Business Information System). It was agreed that in the

first phase only four pilot countries should be involved in the UNIDO project: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic.

UNIDO proposal is aimed at designing and developing an information system/network that would enable the users, at any location of the region, to access and obtain information required to run their business in the region or worldwide. It should be stressed at this point that it is not intended to create new centres, networks and databases for this purpose. In our view, the existing information centres and national/global networks could be utilized. The objective of the project is to initiate and facilitate cooperation and coordination of presently functioning national centres in designing and developing compatible and harmonized business information databases and information services.

It is assumed that the information should be available through different forms (hard copies, diskettes, CD-ROMS, on-line). The system should provide primary, secondary and referral information. If the requested data were not available, the system should indicate where, how and for how much the data can be obtained.

B. Objectives of the workshop

1. Get acquainted with and to consider the UNIDO project on Instant Business Information System - IBIS. To exchange views, experience in organizing information services for SMEs in the Vyshegrad countries.
2. Adopt recommendations and a Plan of Action on a follow up phase project, in particular on extending the IBIS to other countries of the Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

C. Organization

The workshop, organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in cooperation with the National Centre for Informatics was held in Bratislava from 14 to 15 November 1995. Beside participants from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic, three UNIDO and one FID representatives participated in the workshop.

Annex I contains the programme of the workshop and Annex II the list of participants.

II. WORKING SESSIONS

Presentations

UNIDO representatives informed on (a) the role and activities of the Industrial Information Section in light of the on-going UNIDO reform; (b) the regional programme for central, eastern Europe. A brief description was given to two regional projects forming the backbone of the above programme highlighting the objectives of the regional project aiming at the establishment of the Instant Business Information Systems (IBIS); (c) the activities of UNIDO with respect to making information on UNIDO services and databases available on Internet.

National experts from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic have informed the participants on the situation in their home countries, with respect to the economic trends, users of business information among the small and medium sized companies, on their information needs, on information providers, existing telecommunications networks and on their comments/recommendations with respect to the IBIS.

The country reports were followed by a UNIDO expert who has summarized the findings and proposals presented by the national experts and based on their views and recommendations outlined the UNIDO proposal for the implementation of the IBIS in the four pilot countries and the future extension of the IBIS to other countries of the Central, Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The representative of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) has expressed interest in a close co-operation with UNIDO, in developing regional industrial and business information services.

The workshop participants have been informed by the representative of Kompas Slovakia on the achievements of this company worldwide and particularly in the Slovak Republic.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop has provided an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with the situation in industrial and business information services for the small and medium enterprises in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic. Moreover, the workshop offered a forum for exchanging views, experiences and suggestions on future actions in developing an efficient information system that would cater for the needs of the entrepreneurs in the above countries and would offer reliable and up-to-date business information services.

The participants have strongly supported UNIDO's proposal to establish the IBIS in the four countries and endorsed UNIDO's endeavour to extend the IBIS to all countries in the region.

With regard to the findings of the national experts, the following conclusions apply for all pilot countries:

- the telecommunication infrastructure, in particular the availability of the Internet is fairly good in the prospective IBIS member countries. The fees for acquiring the Internet services from the local providers do not seem to be an obstacle to SMEs. The main service outsourced by SMEs is e-mail. The transmission protocols SLIP or PPP required by WWW are hardly used;
- due to low awareness of individual entrepreneurs and SMEs about the business opportunities offered by, and through the Internet, there is a need for (and a window of opportunity from a purely business standpoint) intermediary organizations helping the end-users to tap the requested information via Internet.

- growing understanding that the main feature of the information provided is its quality;
- acceptance of the rule that information services have to go hand in hand with networking and that connectivity is a key issue when setting up heterogeneous information systems addressing the needs of various categories of users;
- growing awareness, especially among cutting-edge entrepreneurs and decision makers, about the role of information in speeding up and facilitating decision making processes and in developing competitive advantages of companies and also in boosting productivity and quality of products.

The workshop has appreciated the interest of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) in regional industrial and business information services and its intention to support UNIDO's activities in developing IBIS.

Recommendations of the workshop

1. UNIDO to take appropriate steps to develop the project on extension of IBIS to other countries in the region and to secure funds for such a project.
2. Promote the idea of IBIS in the countries of the Central, Eastern Europe and in the countries of the former Soviet Union through meetings and seminars.
3. The ultimate IBIS system has to be built up by the interested countries, rather than by UNIDO. The only role for UNIDO to play is to provide the countries with its expertise, information resources and experience in establishing similar systems. At the initial stage of the system design and development, namely within this project, UNIDO is supposed to provide the seed capital to purchase the above mentioned computer and to start running and administering the basic IBIS functions and to coordinate the pilot project activities.
4. Establish a Steering Committee, whose members will be the representatives of the National Focal Points (NFPs) and representatives of UNIDO to co-ordinate the future work of IBIS.
5. Initiate cooperation and coordination of the presently functioning National Focal Points in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic in designing and developing compatible and harmonized business information databases and information services in order to make them directly available to end-users, in particular to SMEs.
6. Design and start-up a pilot operation of the Instant Business Information System (IBIS) that will: (i) link the industrial and business information services, in particular focused on small and medium enterprises; and (ii) will serve as a source of information first of all addressed and available to SMEs.

7. The main aim of IBIS should not be the creation of new information products and services but becoming a *referral* system and this way to promote the awareness and consequently the *use* of these services.
8. There is no need for a dedicated telecommunication network. Instead IBIS should make use of the existing telecommunication facilities, mainly that of Internet.
9. Within the frame of IBIS, *regional metadatabases* should be developed and made available through Internet. As an option a CD-ROM version should also be considered.
10. National Focal Points should also act as intermediaries, i.e. to receive orders from the member countries and fulfil them by contacting the competent organization(s) in the country, if the requesting organization prefers this way of communication. The intermediary role of the National Focal Point should also function in the other direction, i.e. by collecting requests in the country and transferring them to other IBIS member countries.
11. One of the main tasks of the national focal points should be extensive marketing and promotion of IBIS to enlarge the number of organizations involved into the realization of the system and to increase awareness of the new service in the business community. An *IBIS newsletter* (on the Internet and also in printed form) would be beneficial in distributing information on the system.
12. Regional courses should be organized for the staff of the National Focal Points to train them in using the business information sources and services in the member countries. National Focal Points should be responsible for the *user education*. To assist them a set of educational materials and tools should be prepared with international co-operation (leaflets, manuals, A-V materials, demos, etc.)
13. The IBIS database system should comprise a set of seven functional database modules (companies, i.e. basic and dedicated company data, company offers and demands, business missions and visits, fairs and exhibitions, training, legislation, documentary information and information on countries). A set of operational modules should be also included, such as permanent information, e.g. classification of company activity and product, company legal forms, geographical coverage, data security module, etc.
14. A register of queries (intended for the central focal point in UNIDO) should also be available at each of the NFPs, even at the cost of some programming effort, as a feedback for attracting/serving more clients/users and for upgrading the information services.
15. IBIS should be instant, high-quality and transactional (with the meaning of "transactional" gradually expanding from data transfer capabilities to SW upgrading capability (in a controlled manner for the entire network) to advertisements to hand-shaking (business matching) procedures and, ultimately, to conducting business over the network.

16. It should be worthwhile, at an appropriate stage, to start defining the subscription and pricing policies of IBIS. Ultimately, after the startup period IBIS should become self-sufficient i.e. making some profit!
17. FP/UNIDO and NFPs equip with the same, or at least compatible hw equipment, with the same (compatible) software and for the whole IBIS implement the same software for the users interface.
18. Propose and implement the unified structure of the record for the databases in all FPs; beside the national version of the separate databases create also an English one and make it accessible in each FPs;
19. With the support of chambers of commerce and SMEs' association make promotion of the IBIS project, organize regular lectures and workshops for effective services of IBIS.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME**Tuesday, 14 November 1995****Morning:**

- Registration
- Opening of the workshop
- UNIDO information services
Mr. Podshibyakin
- UNIDO information services for industry, Regional Programme for Central- and Eastern Europe
Mr. Pavlik
- INTERNET - a source of information on UNIDO services
Mr. Bullington
- Business information services in the Czech Republic
Mr. Stefec

Afternoon

- Business information services in Hungary
Mr. Szanto
- Business information services in Poland
Mr. Klucinski
- Business information services in the Slovak Republic
Mr. Schill
- Information services and products of Kompas Slovakia
Ms. Mlynarova
- Discussion

Wednesday, 15 November 1995

Morning

- **Instant Business Information System (IBIS)
Mr. Muraszekwicz**
- **Discussion**

Afternoon

- **Discussion**
- **Adoption of recommendations and a plan of action
Closing of the workshop**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS***Czech Republic***

Mr. Rudolf Stefec
Director
National Information Centre
of the Czech Republic
Havelkova 22
130 00 Praha 3

Tel: (00422) 242 23 177
Fax: (00422) 242 23 177, 242 21 484, 242 31 114

Hungary

Mr. Gyorgy Stubnya
Deputy Director
National Technical Information Centre and Library
Muzeum u. 17
1088 Budapest

Tel: (00361) 118 5852
Fax: (00361) 138 2414

Mr. Peter Szanto
Director
Hungarian Central Technical Library
Muzeum u. 17
1428 Budapest

Tel: (00361) 138 48 37
Fax: (00361) 118 01 09

Poland

Mr. W. Januszko
Director Info Data
Polish Chamber of Commerce
ul. Trebacka 4
00-074 Warsaw

Tel: (004822) 2740 88, 26 31 70, 26 02 21 ext. 384,312
Fax: (004822) 27 40 88

Poland (cont.)

Mr. Jacek Klucinski
Polish Chamber of Commerce
Warsaw

Tel: (004822)
Fax: (004822) 27 40 88

Mr. Mieczyslaw Muraszewicz
Institute of Computer Information Engineering
ul. Malczewskiego 36/38 M.4
02-622 Warsaw

Tel: (004822) 44 79 31
Fax: (004822) 40 72 65

Slovak Republic

Mr. Lubor Molnar
Database Administrator
Department of Informatics
NADSME
Nevadzova 5
82101 Bratislava

Tel: (00427)
Fax: (00427) 22 24 34

Mr. Peter Lieskovsky
Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
Bratislava

Tel: (00427)
Fax: (00427)

Ms. Anna Mlynarova
Deputy Director
Kompas Slovakia a.s.
Ruzinovska 1
821 02 Bratislava

Tel: (00427) 522 27 65
Fax: (00427) 522 27 19

Slovak Republic (cont.)

Mr. Stefan Schill
Deputy Director
National Centre for Informatics
Hanulova 5/a
844 16 Bratislava

Tel: (00427) 76 36 69
Fax: (00427) 76 94 89

Mr. Peter Slavkovsky
Director
Computing Centre of the
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Bratislava

Tel: (00427)
Fax: (00427) 37 58 81

Mr. Vladimir Stefanik
National Centre for Informatics
Hanulova 5/a
844 16 Bratislava

Tel: (00427) 76 36 69
Fax: (00427) 76 94 89

UNIDO representatives

Mr. Vladimir Podshibyakin
Chief, Industrial Information Section
UNIDO
P.O. Box 300
A-1400 Vienna
Austria

Tel: (00431) 211 31 3691
Fax: (00431) 230 75 84
Tlx: 135612 uno a

Mr. Juraj Pavlik
Industrial Information Section
UNIDO
P.O. Box 300
A-1400 Vienna
Austria

Tel: (00431) 21131 3794
Fax: (00431) 230 75 84
Tlx: 135612 uno a

Mr. Robert Bullington
UNIDO Technical Adviser
P.O. Box 300
A-1400 Vienna
Austria

Tel: (00431) 211 31 5211
Fax: (00431) 230 75 84
Tlx: 135612 uno a