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**Economic Commission for Europe**

## Conference of European Statisticians

**Fifty-ninth plenary session**

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

**Progress reports and work of the Conference of European Statisticians Teams of Specialists****Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission  
for Europe Statistical Programme: major achievements in  
June 2010 – June 2011 and plans for the rest of 2011****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe works according to an annual Statistical Programme that is approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians and by the Commission's Executive Committee. The 2011 Statistical Programme is available at the UNECE website.

The present note provides an overview of the implementation of the Statistical Programme during the period from June 2010 to June 2011 and the main activities planned until the end of 2011.

The list of meetings and workshops held during June 2010-June 2011 is provided in document ECE/CES/2011/11/Add.1 and the preliminary list of meetings planned to be held from June 2011 onwards is provided in document ECE/CES/2011/11/Add.2.

## I. Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau play an important role in **coordinating the international statistical activities** in the UNECE region. Among the main objectives are to improve the quality and comparability of statistics, achieve greater uniformity in concepts and definitions, respond to any emerging need for international statistical cooperation and promote statistical standards. The participation of the major international organizations (Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UN Statistical Division, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, etc.) is important to avoid duplication of work and ensure the efficient use of resources of the various international agencies.

2. The CES holds every year during the plenary session two one-day **seminars** that provide a forum for top-level management of statistical offices to explore the fundamental issues of statistical systems and leading-edge emerging topics. The seminars in 2010 were devoted to the **impact of the global crises on statistical systems** and to the **role of the spatial dimension in official statistics**.

3. In 2011, one of the seminars will deal with the **organization of data collection and sharing, and the management challenges for the implementation of the SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) standard**. The seminar will allow the exchange of experiences in the management of data collection and sharing in national statistical organizations. It will focus specifically on the strategic challenges related to the implementation of SDMX standards from a management perspective.

4. The second seminar will be devoted to **measuring human capital**. This seminar will discuss the economic importance of knowledge and skills in the context of labour economics, growth theory, business economics, sustainable development, and in particular in relation to the demographic change. The personal and social wellbeing effects of learning are seen as being as important as the economic ones. Statisticians are in the early stages of work in this area and are trying to reach common views on why and how to measure human capital.

5. A key tool of the Conference and its Bureau for coordination of the international statistical work is the **Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA)**, maintained by the UNECE secretariat. The database informs about the statistical activities carried out by about 30 international organizations in the UNECE region. The statistical classification used by the database has been adopted for various other purposes. For example, it is used for reporting on technical assistance activities by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century - PARIS 21 Consortium. The first three domains of this classification have been adopted as part of the SDMX standard. It is also being used for the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards currently prepared by the Coordinating Committee of Statistical Activities.

## II. Collection, processing and dissemination of macro-economic, social and demographic statistics

6. The UNECE maintains a free online statistical database (<http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/>) available in English and Russian, covering the countries of the UNECE region. The database includes macro-economic, social,

demographic, forestry and transport indicators. An important feature is the gender breakdown, which is included where possible. The database will be further enhanced by the addition of data on progress towards the MDGs and on globalisation. A major update of forestry data will be made in cooperation with the Trade and Timber Division and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

### III. Methodological work in various statistical areas

7. The Conference continued to be involved in work that leads to development of new statistical standards and guidelines in several areas of economic and social statistics.

8. Several expert meetings held in the various subject areas were organized as joint meetings with other international organizations, mainly with Eurostat, OECD, the United Nations Statistics Division, United Nations Population Fund, ILO and IMF.

9. In addition to providing substantive inputs to and secretariat support for these meetings, the role of the UNECE secretariat has been to allow for the non-European Union (EU) and non-OECD countries be associated with the development work of the partner organizations. Another role that the UNECE plays is to provide a bridge for the specialized UN agencies (e.g. International Labour Office (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO)) with the national statistical offices in the region.

10. The methodological work is undertaken with support, financial and mainly in-kind contributions, from the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the CES member countries as well as from major partner international organizations.

#### A. Economic statistics

11. The UNECE secretariat actively supports the **implementation of the updated global standard on national accounting, the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA)** in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-East Europe. In 2010 the UNECE secretariat conducted a survey on the main challenges and priorities for the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA) in these countries in order to identify areas where support in terms of regional meetings and capacity building is needed. The initiative was well received by the countries.

12. A Group of Experts continued the work to develop practical guidance and recommendations on how to deal with the **impact of globalisation on national economic statistics**. Such distortions are brought about by e.g. operations of multinational companies, international transactions in trade and services, global manufacturing and international labour mobility. The work has progressed well and a publication on the *Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts* is expected to be published by the end of 2011.

13. A Task Force has completed its work to update the international **handbook on household income statistics**. The update takes into account the developments over the last decade in data sources and methods and provides best practices and quality assurance guidelines to the national statistical offices on the measurement of household income. The updated publication, entitled *Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics, Second Edition*, is expected to be published by the end of 2011.

14. The Conference also supports the work in other areas of economic statistics. The UNECE participates in the Intersecretariat Working Group that coordinates international activities on **price statistics**. Currently, a new *Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices* is being drafted under the auspices of the Intersecretariat Group and planned to be

published by Eurostat in 2011. In the area of **business statistics** the secretariat continues its participation in the international work on business registers.

15. A new **capacity building programme on economic statistics** in countries of Central Asia and Eastern Europe has been initiated with financial support from the World Bank. A number of regional workshops will be organised in 2011 and 2012, and extensive training materials and practical guidelines will be produced in English and Russian. The workshops provide training in short-term economic statistics, seasonal adjustment methods, inflation measurement, national accounts and dissemination of statistics.

## B. Social and demographic statistics

16. The UNECE plays a leading role (often jointly with other organizations) in selected areas of **social and demographic statistics**, such as population and housing censuses, migration, gender statistics, and crime statistics. A number of Task Forces created by the Bureau of the Conference have successfully continued their work to develop methodological guidelines and recommendations.

17. The *Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses* developed under the auspices of the CES are widely accepted as an international standard. In 2010, the UNECE secretariat continued to provide support to countries in the region in the implementation of the Recommendations. The UNECE secretariat, in cooperation with Eurostat and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organised two expert meetings and one training workshop to address issues related to the ongoing censuses. The UNECE also participates in the international monitoring of the population and housing census in the UN Administered Region of Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

18. **Migration statistics** is high on the agenda for most countries in the region. In this context, a work session and two training workshops were held in 2010 to facilitate progress in the production and comparability of international migration statistics. A Task Force has been analysing the impact of the different definitions of the length of stay of the migrants on the migration estimates. In addition, a new initiative was launched to improve the measurement of socio-economic conditions of migrants.

19. In 2010 the Conference endorsed the Manual on **Gender Statistics**. The Manual was published in English, and a Russian version is planned to be issued in 2011. It is important to note that the World Bank is planning translation into other languages in order to use the Manual as a training material outside the UNECE region. Recently, a Task Force started working to improve the monitoring of gender equality by using gender-relevant statistical indicators and data. Furthermore, two sub-regional and two national training workshops on gender statistics were conducted in cooperation with the World Bank.

20. In response to the General Assembly resolutions on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women<sup>1</sup>, a Task Force developed a questionnaire for collecting data on globally agreed indicators on **violence against women**. The questionnaire is currently tested in several countries in different regions of the world and is expected to become a standard data collection tool to be recommended to national statistical offices globally. An expert group meeting and a regional training workshop were conducted on this topic. This UNECE work is closely linked to the development of guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women undertaken by the UN Statistical Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolutions 61/143, 62/133, 63/155 and 64/137.

21. In the area of **crime statistics**, the UNECE, in cooperation with UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), continues to promote the dissemination of the Manual on victimization surveys that was published in 2010. Work was undertaken to produce versions of the Manual in Russian, French and Spanish. In addition, a new Task Force was created to analyse methodological issues related to the development of an international classification of crimes for statistical purposes.

22. A Task Force completed the development of a set of questions for measuring **health status**. The work is conducted in close coordination with other initiatives in this field undertaken by Eurostat and the World Health Organization.

23. A new activity is launched to develop common guidelines and good practices in implementing **time-use surveys**. These surveys are an important source for information on social behaviour of the members of a society, shedding light on unpaid work, quality of life, living conditions, gender equality, etc. Increasing harmonization in this area will allow comparability between countries and get more value for money from these complex and resource demanding surveys.

### C. Environment and sustainable development statistics

24. Close attention to environmental and climate change issues have increased the demand for high quality statistics in this field.

25. In 2010, the work on improving environmental data production, environmental reporting and comparability of environmental statistics in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe made good progress. A Task Force is guided jointly by the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians. The work was also sponsored by UN Statistics Division in New York. The Task Force reviewed about half of the **environmental indicators** recommended by the *Guidelines on Environmental Indicators*, endorsed by the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in 2007. The Task Force will contribute to the preparations for the next Ministerial Meeting in 2011. The work provides a unique opportunity to bring together **environmental experts** and **statisticians**, who in the case of some countries came together for the first time to exchange experience and share knowledge. The mandate of this Task Force was extended by both the CES Bureau and the Committee on Environmental Policy to allow for the review of the remaining indicators from the *Guidelines*.

26. In response to an increasing demand for statistics related to **climate change**, the CES Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to explore the degree to which national statistical offices are involved in climate change related work and in compiling greenhouse gas inventories. The UNECE secretariat developed a questionnaire in close collaboration with Eurostat and the UN Statistics Division in New York. The UNECE secretariat carried out the survey in February 2011 and is currently processing the responses.

27. Substantial progress has been made on developing a framework to measure **sustainable development**. A Task Force established as a follow-up to earlier work published in 2009 further advanced the development of a conceptual framework based on the capital approach. The framework has been extended to include quality of life aspects and the international dimension of sustainable development. This activity is strongly linked to the work undertaken by other institutions, such as the Stiglitz Report, the European Commission’s initiative “GDP and Beyond”, and the OECD project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

28. The UNECE continued to provide statistical support to the countries in the region in **monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. UNECE has established a network of national MDG focal points in statistical offices and has organized

a number of capacity development workshops in cooperation with UN Statistics Division in New York.

#### D. Cross-cutting issues

29. A number of activities related to the management of statistical information systems, statistical methodology and statistical dissemination and communication were conducted. The UNECE provides forums for **information systems managers, methodologists and communication experts** from national and international statistical organizations to share experiences. Recently, a High-level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics was created to oversee this work. Different teams of specialists are currently preparing guidelines and recommendations to improve the processing and dissemination of data in statistical organizations. The generic statistical business process model developed by the group on statistical metadata has become a *de facto* global standard for describing the organisation of a statistical production process. Cooperation with other international statistical organizations remains strong, particularly in the field of statistical data and metadata exchange standards. Further steps will be taken to facilitate the sharing of software, ideas and experiences between statistical organizations to encourage more efficient and sustainable national statistical production systems.

30. Annual expert meetings on the **dissemination and communication of statistics** are organised by the UNECE secretariat to share experiences and promote good practices in communicating with the data users. A new guide to communicating with the media was released at the end of 2010 as part of the popular *Making Data Meaningful* series. The first issue in the series, *A guide to writing stories about numbers* is currently in its third print run to meet the demand for this widely used publication. Newly initiated work on **statistical literacy** is progressing well.

### IV. Capacity building

31. The UNECE Statistical Division has a long and successful history of involvement in effort to **enhance the capacity of countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to meet international standards and guidelines in the collection, production and dissemination of official statistics**. UNECE also helps these countries to strengthen their statistical legislation and to implement the **UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**, a standard that was adopted by UNECE in 1992 and at the global level in 1994.

32. In order to support the development of national statistical capacities, UNECE, in cooperation with other national and international donors, organized seminars, training workshops and advisory services on various statistical domains related to **population censuses and migration statistics, economic development, monitoring the achievement of MDGs, gender and violence against women, statistical quality, and communication with users**.

33. The UNECE, together with Eurostat and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), is involved in **conducting global assessments (GA)** of the national statistical systems in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The purpose of a GA is to provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. It helps the national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to have a deep knowledge of their institutional and administrative work frame for the programming of statistical cooperation. GAs were carried out in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and most recently in Kyrgyz Republic. Belarus, Moldova and

Ukraine also requested a GA of their respective national statistical systems and some preparatory work is underway.

34. Capacity building programme organised for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-East Europe focuses on **streamlining the production processes of official statistics from the collection of raw data to the dissemination and communication of the results**. Keywords are efficiency, comparability and sustainability with a special focus on economic and social statistics. This will be done by promoting the exchange at subregional level of national good practices, undertaking benchmark studies and stimulating the foundation of an active network of competences.

35. Documents and presentations from all meetings, seminars and training workshops organized by the UNECE can be found on the UNECE Statistical Division's web site at: [http://live.unece.org/stats/stats\\_h.html](http://live.unece.org/stats/stats_h.html)

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