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**Economic Commission for Europe****Conference of European Statisticians****Sixty-first plenary session**

Geneva, 10-12 June 2013

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**Selection of topics for seminars to be held during the 2014 CES plenary session****Selection of topics for the seminars to be held during the 2014  
Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

In May 2013, the UNECE secretariat conducted an electronic consultation with the members of the Conference on the possible topics for discussion at the 2014 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The list of topics sent for consultation is attached in Annex I. The list has been regularly updated, based on the proposals from countries and recommendations by the Bureau. The list of CES seminars held in previous years is provided in Annex II.

Member countries and the international organizations were invited to select topics for discussion and indicate whether their office would be willing to organise a seminar/session and/or prepare a paper on a specific topic.

The present note provides a summary of the replies received.

## I. Results of the survey: preferences

1. This year forty-three respondents sent their proposals. The following countries and international organizations (IOs) replied to the survey: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, The Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

2. **The topics that received most votes are presented in the next paragraphs, by decreasing number of preferences.** The countries and organizations which offered to organize a seminar/session or to present a paper are listed under each topic.

### A. Most preferred topics

#### Topic (7) How to communicate the value of official statistics in the increasingly competitive data industry

3. This topic received the highest number of preferences: **23 votes** (20 from countries and 3 from IOs).

4. Contributions offered on this topic:

Papers: Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, United States (possibly).

Session organizers: Sweden.

5. **Comments made:**

Australia suggests that the topic should be broadened to "How do we redefine and communicate the value of official statistics in the increasingly competitive data industry". In this way, the topic would get to a fundamental question that underlies both topics 6 (budget cuts and programming) and 8 (measuring what matters).

Ireland considers the issues raised by topics 7 (how to communicate the value of statistics), 5 (capability building) and 8 (measuring what matters) to be ones that statistical offices will have to face, from a corporate perspective, in the years ahead. While clearly there will be domain specific challenges in some of the areas outlined (environment, migration etc.), perhaps the statistical community could gain more from discussing strategic issues during the CES seminars in 2014.

United States notes that it is important to think of establishing "strategic partnerships" with other data providers, giving attention to comparative advantage to the National Statistical Offices in this new world.

OECD believes that a seminar on this theme would be a good opportunity to discuss in more depth an important aspect of the work of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services (HLG).

**Topic (5) Capability building - where is the next generation of statisticians and how do we grow them?**

6. This topic received **16 votes** (15 from countries and 1 from IO).
7. Contributions offered on this topic:  
Papers: Belarus.
8. **Comments made:**  
Turkey prefers this topic as a cross-cutting issue since capacity building is a comprehensive and multi-layered process.

**Topic (4) Migration statistics**

9. This topic received **16 votes** (14 from countries and 2 from IOs).
10. Contributions offered on this topic:  
Papers: Denmark, Lithuania, Norway, Slovak Republic, United States (possibly).  
Session organizers: UNSD.
11. **Comments made:**  
Denmark is willing to contribute a paper, which deals with the use of register based migration statistics.  
Norway is ready to make a contribution with papers/presentations regarding administrative sources/use of registers, etc.

**Topic (8) Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics towards difficult to measure topics**

12. This topic received **12 votes** from countries.
13. Contributions offered on this topic:  
United Kingdom expressed interest in contributing to such a session.
14. **Comments made:**  
Canada believes this topic could be interesting if the focus is made narrower.  
United Kingdom considers useful to have a focus on measuring inequalities.

**Topic (2) Statistics on political participation and other community activities, including volunteer work**

15. This topic received **10 votes** (9 from countries and 1 from IO).
16. Contributions offered on this topic:  
Papers: Poland, Sweden, OECD, United States (possibly).
17. **Comments made:**  
Poland proposed to contribute a paper on the “Polish experience in conducting and elaborating results of surveys on volunteer work”.  
Sweden offers to contribute a paper that presents Sweden’s approach to statistics on democracy. By using register statistics and the traditional Labour Force Survey

(LFS) as a vehicle, a broad set of key statistics of high quality are produced in a convenient and cost efficient way. A national statistical system can provide key statistics that both facilitate and help evaluate the democratic process. This includes statistics on voting rates in different population groups and statistics on nominated and elected political candidates.

OECD considers the topic to be good for a seminar to follow-up to the in-depth review of the CES Bureau on the same issue undertaken by INEGI. This is an important aspect of quality of life. OECD is currently doing work on social capital and plans to undertake work on volunteering and its monetary valuation.

#### **Topic (6) Budget cuts and statistical programming**

18. This topic received **9 votes** from countries.

19. Contributions offered on this topic:

Papers: Netherlands, United States (possibly).

United Kingdom expressed interest in contributing to such a session.

20. **Comments made:**

Ireland notes that this topic is an issue every statistical office will have to deal with but solutions don't appear to be that generic. However, if the topic were broadened to examine the mechanisms statistical offices are using to address the challenge e.g. Business Process Improvement, Organisational Re-structuring, improved exploitation of technology, then Ireland believes this topic could be very interesting and the shared experiences could be invaluable.

United Kingdom prefers to focus on setting statistical priorities, statistical work programmes and responsive statistics.

United States adds another dimension– “fitness for use,” or some might say “how good is good enough?”. In other words, the statistical offices have spent many dollars “getting the last percent” in response rates (this may be a somewhat different issue in countries that use more administrative records than surveys) – is this necessary given the uses to which the data are put?

### **B. Topics that received less support**

#### **Topic (3) Environment-related energy statistics**

21. This topic received **6 votes** (5 from countries and 1 from IO).

22. Contributions offered on this topic:

Papers: Australia.

Session organizers: UNSD.

#### **Topic (1) Climate change related statistics**

23. This topic received **5 votes** (4 from countries and 1 from IOs).

24. Contributions offered on this topic:

Session organizers: UNSD.

### C. Additional topics proposed for consideration in the future

Ireland notes it might be worth considering the issue of integration / standardisation / industrialisation of official statistics, which is a significant focus of the ESS at the moment in the context of the "vision" document. It would be interesting to hear what is happening beyond the ESS in this area.

Mexico proposes three new topics: (1) Advances in statistical supply microdata, (2) The identification value added in global production chains, and (3) The collection through internet of the economic surveys and the advantages for the respondents.

New Zealand considers the topic "Measuring distributional aspects and inequality" as an important topic and one we don't appear to have addressed thoroughly for some time. They suggest to be developed as a proposal in the list of topic for the following year.

UNIDO proposed the topic on structural business statistics (industrial statistics) to be included again in the list of topics for reflection on the next CES plenary sessions. In 2012 the topic has scored relatively high (3<sup>rd</sup> place), and therefore, considered as a popular topic.

## II. Conclusions

25. The CES Bureau will discuss the results of the survey and will present a **proposal to the Conference for the topics of the 2014 CES seminars under agenda item 9.**

## **Annex I**

The following list of possible topics for the seminar at the 2014 CES plenary session was circulated to countries and international organizations for consultation:

1. Climate change related statistics
2. Statistics on political participation and other community activities, including volunteer work
3. Environment-related energy statistics
4. Migration statistics
5. Capability building - where is the next generation of statisticians and how do we grow them?
6. Budget cuts and statistical programming
7. How to communicate the value of official statistics in the increasingly competitive data industry
8. Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics towards difficult to measure topics

## **Annex II**

### **CES seminars held since 2009**

- 2009 1. Balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate to produce policy relevant data  
2. Strategic issues in business statistics
  - 2010 1. Spatial statistics  
2. Impact of global crises on statistical systems
  - 2011 1. Organization of data collection and sharing, and the management challenges for the implementation of SDMX  
2. Measuring human capital
  - 2012 1. Implementing the fundamental principles of official statistics, including issues related to coordination of national statistical systems  
2. Challenges for future population and housing censuses (based on lessons learned from the last round)
  - 2013 1. Challenges in implementing the system of environmental-economic accounting (SEEA) and measuring sustainable development in follow up to Rio+ 20  
2. Challenges in providing access to micro-data for research purposes
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