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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Selection of topics for seminars to be held during the 2014 CES plenary session

Proposal for the seminars to take place during the 2014 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

Note by the secretariat

1. In May 2013, the UNECE secretariat conducted an electronic consultation with the member countries of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and international organizations on possible topics for seminars to be held at the 2014 CES plenary session. The results of the consultation are presented in document ECE/CES/2013/13. A total of 43 responses were received, of which 38 from countries and 5 from international organizations.
2. The CES Bureau discussed at its short lunch meeting on 10 June 2013 the organisation of the 2014 CES seminars. Below is the proposal for the seminar topics based on the outcome of the electronic consultation and the Bureau discussion.

I. For the first seminar:

3. The following topic is proposed:

Topic (7) What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate that value?

Seminar organizer: United Kingdom

Session organizer: Sweden, Eurostat

Contributions offered by: Australia, Denmark, Mexico, Netherlands, Sweden, United States (possibly), Eurostat

4. This topic was supported by 23 votes (20 from countries and 3 from IOs). It attracted high number of votes with more than half of the countries voting for this topic.

5. The world is changing; more data were produced in the last two years than in the whole of the rest of human history. Official statistics are just one of many sources of information competing for the attention of users, and funders.
6. This topic could consider approaches to understanding the value of official statistics, and communication strategies to highlight their importance and role. As well as providing an overview of the evolving context in which official statistics are produced and used, the discussion could also focus on what we can learn from the private sector. The seminar could take into consideration the experiences within the international statistical community.
7. This seminar can focus on the following issues:
 - (a) How do we define the value and benefits of official statistics in the increasingly competitive data industry? What is the value of other types of data?
 - (b) Who do we think needs to understand this value?
 - (c) How do our users see us? What do they value? To what extent can we rely on notions of quality of official statistics to keep the loyalty of our users?
 - (d) Which communication tools can help us better to reach current and potential users?
 - (e) Should we form partnerships with data disseminators outside official statistics to help get our message across? Which could be the 'strategic partnerships' with other data providers?

II. For the second seminar:

8. The following topic is proposed:

Topic (4) Migration statistics

Seminar organizer: Mexico in collaboration with UNECE

Session organizers: Countries to be identified - volunteers needed (UNSD and CIS-STAT as co-organizers)

Contributions offered by: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, United States (possibly), Eurostat, OECD
9. The topic received 16 votes (14 from countries and 2 from IOs).
10. This topic ranked second together with Topic 5 (capability building). However, it attracted greater attention in terms of interest to contribute to the seminar organization and provide papers.
11. The topic is important in the light of the upcoming 2013 High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development at the United Nations General Assembly. The need for the improved collection of migration data is critical. However, in many countries migration statistics remain incomplete, inaccurate, out-of-date, or non-existent. There is still a great need for improved data quality and accessibility, which are necessary for making evidence-based policy decisions and informing public debate. In addition to improvement of basic data on the size of migration, information on the characteristics of migrants, as well as the impact of migration on both migrants themselves and the places they move to and leave, need to be also improved.
12. The seminar could discuss the following issues:

(a) Statistics on emigration, traditionally weak in most countries, can be improved using data from receiving countries. The 2009 CES endorsed the “Guidelines on exchanging data to improve emigration statistics”, and promoted their implementation through data exchange exercises. What is currently being done in this area, as well as what could be done in the future? How to improve cooperation between statistical agencies of sending and receiving countries? How could the research community be engaged more effectively in addressing these challenges?

(b) Administrative sources and data from unofficial sources are increasingly used to produce migration statistics and have the potential to improve their coverage, comprehensiveness and quality. What are the advantages and the risks associated with these developments? What can we learn from the experience of countries that are advanced in this area?

(c) The population census is traditionally the primary source of information on migration, in particular on stocks of migrants. By complying with the CES Recommendations for the 2010 round of censuses, countries are expected to be able to produce more data on migration, of better quality and more comparable than those produced in previous census rounds. What are the first results of this exercise, and what lessons have been learnt for future endeavors?

(d) Migration patterns during the economic crisis changed. As the economic situation in many migrant-receiving countries deteriorated, flows to these countries decreased, many migrants returned to their countries of origin while others remained, often with only weak attachment to the labour market and ambiguous legal status. What are the specific challenges for migration statistics in relation to these changes? Are the statistical systems able to capture these changes adequately?
