

**United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe**

Report of the Conference of European Statisticians

**Sixty-first plenary session
Geneva, 10-12 June 2013**



United Nations • Geneva, 2013

I. Introduction

A. Attendance

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its sixty-first plenary session in Geneva, from Monday 10 June until Wednesday 12 June 2013. It was attended by representatives from Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uzbekistan.

2. The Conference was attended by representatives of the European Commission (Eurostat); European Free Trade Association (EFTA); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Services Trade Information Agency; Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); World Trade Organization (WTO) and University of London.

B. Agenda and procedure

3. The provisional agenda (ECE/CES/84 and Add.1) was adopted.

C. Opening statements

4. Ms. I. Krizman, Vice-Chair of the CES Bureau, chaired the Conference. She opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Mr. S. Alkalaj, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), delivered an opening statement. He welcomed the timely contribution that the CES provides for establishing the post-2015 Development Agenda and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

II. Matters arising for the Conference of European Statisticians from the 2013 sessions of Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Statistical Commission

A. 65th Session of the Economic Commission for Europe

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/1

5. The outcome of the review of the UNECE work, including that of the Statistics subprogramme, was presented to the Conference for information.

6. The UNECE member countries expressed strong support for the work of the CES and the Statistical Division during the review. The way the Conference and its subsidiary bodies work was considered as a good example of efficient cooperation with other international organizations active in statistics. The review concluded that the CES works in an efficient way and produces concrete results with clear added value, including methodological principles, recommendations, guidelines and databases. It was noted that the work of the Conference attracts additional funding including from outside the UNECE region.

7. The review recommended that the UNECE Statistics subprogramme should continue implementing the existing mandates under the overall guidance of the CES and the UNECE Executive Committee, and continue the good cooperation with partner organizations such as Eurostat, CIS-STAT, OECD, World Bank and IMF. Particular attention should be given to the work on measuring sustainable development. The subprogramme should continue its capacity-building activities from extra-budgetary resources of particular benefit to the countries in the UNECE region.

1. Action taken by the Conference

8. The Conference welcomed the conclusions of the UNECE review and the support received for the work of the CES and the UNECE Statistical Division. The Conference asked the CES Bureau to review *the Rules and procedures governing the work of the CES and its Bureau* in light of the new *Guidelines on procedures and practices for UNECE bodies*.

B. 44th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

9. Mr. S. Schweinfest, UNSD informed the Conference about the decisions of the 2013 session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) which have implications on the Conference's work:

(a) The UNSC, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), adopted the revised preamble of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics at its meeting on 26 February – 1 March 2013. In July 2013, ECOSOC endorsed the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and recommended them further to the General Assembly for endorsement;

(b) The UNSC recognized the importance of the integration of geospatial information and statistics in support of policy making, including at the subnational level. It strongly supported the linking of social, economic and environmental data to time and location attributes in order to maximize the potential of statistical information. A working group of statisticians and the geospatial community will be launched;

(c) Following the request of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the UNSC set up a Friends of the Chair (FOC) group to build a work programme to develop broader measures of progress. The work will be based on a stock taking exercise of current national, regional and international practices in the field. The FOC should undertake an active dialogue with United Nations bodies and the policy sphere in order to ensure that a robust statistical measurement approach is incorporated from the outset in preparations for the post-2015 development agenda. The FOC will report on the preliminary results of its work to the UNSC in 2014. The FOC aims to work in an open and transparent manner. Countries from the UNECE region are well represented in the group.

10. UNSD commended the close cooperation with the CES and its secretariat in supporting statistical development both globally and in the UNECE region.

III. Challenges in implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and measuring sustainable development in follow-up to Rio+ 20

A. Introduction

11. The seminar was organised by the Netherlands, Switzerland and Slovenia. Ms. H. Imbens, the Netherlands, chaired the seminar. In the opening remarks, she addressed the implications for the statistical community of two important international developments: the increased policy attention to sustainable development in the context of follow-up to the Rio+20 Summit, and the adoption of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) by the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2012.

B. Session 1: Measuring sustainable development in follow-up to Rio+20

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/ 21, 22, 26, 42, 43

12. The session was organised by Mr. F. Baumgartner, Switzerland. It was based on papers by Eurostat, France, Germany, Poland and UNECE.

13. The session discussed how official statistics could contribute to the development of SDGs and the related targets and indicators, and addressed the roles of statisticians and policy makers in this process.

14. Ambassador M. Gerber, the Swiss Special Representative for Global Sustainable Development and the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, delivered a keynote speech. He stressed the need for a clear view on the challenges and issues that have to be addressed to develop consistent measures of sustainable development. Mr. Gerber noted that monitoring and reporting will be crucial features of a post-2015 framework. Official statistics has to be involved in the process of developing the SDGs and related indicators as soon as possible to ensure that the new goals are set up in a way that they can be monitored. The statistical community can inform policy makers what data and indicators already exist, how they can be used, and where capacity building is needed.

15. Mr. Gerber emphasised that measuring sustainable development has to be based on existing experiences, including the results of the work of the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Task Force. We should learn from the lessons in measuring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The rules of independence, transparency and neutrality, which are applied to statistical work, can contribute to improving good governance of sustainable development.

16. The Session Organizer noted that a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities between statisticians and other stakeholders in measuring sustainable development is important for guaranteeing the quality of data and the independence of national statistical offices. Basing the measurement on a sound conceptual framework can ensure stability in time, avoid political bias, help to identify the issues, and highlight gaps in statistical data and methodology.

17. Measuring the transboundary impacts of sustainable development is a growing concern. The statistical community has to define priorities in filling the gaps and developing methods to provide relevant information in this regard.

18. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Coordination of different international initiatives related to measuring sustainable development is very important, and all available opportunities should be used to attain this goal;

(b) There is a need for urgent action to establish strong links between the policy level and the statistical community in setting up the SDGs;

(c) International cooperation is important to harmonise country practices in measuring sustainable development and to improve data comparability. At the same time, the different policy priorities and national circumstances limit the possibilities to fully harmonize the approaches;

(d) The dialogue between official statistics and policy makers has to be transparent and balanced. Setting the targets and values is a normative task. Statisticians can provide advice on whether the proposed targets are measurable, and which indicators to use. However, the process is organized in different ways in countries and the practices can be different;

(e) Further work on sustainable development indicators should build on existing international initiatives and available data sets. Official statistics needs to consider how to deal with the producers of data and indicators on sustainable development that may come from outside the statistical system;

(f) Often the issue is not so much the data gaps but better communication of the existing rich set of statistical data available in many countries. In communication, an appropriate balance has to be found between the detail in data and conveying clear messages to broad audiences;

(g) The challenge is to measure sustainable development at different levels: international, national and regional/subregional, and the interlinkages between the levels. The work on the global dimension of sustainability and transboundary impacts should continue, with special attention to the social and environmental aspects;

(h) The Recommendations developed by the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development are a major step forward towards harmonising the various approaches and indicators already used by countries and organizations. The work is an example of fruitful international cooperation. It is important to strengthen the visibility of the Recommendations and ensure their effective use.

C. Session 2: Key challenges in implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/ 23–25, 45-48

19. The session was organised by Ms. M. Suvorov, Slovenia. It was based on papers by Australia, Azerbaijan, Mexico, Netherlands, OECD, United Kingdom and a joint paper by Sweden and Australia.

20. The session discussed the key drivers and success factors for SEEA implementation, and how to support the implementation in countries through international cooperation.

21. In his keynote speech, Mr. P. Harper, Australia, emphasized the role of SEEA as a measurement standard for the interactions between the environment and the economy. He noted that national statistical offices should take a lead in implementing environmental-economic accounting. This includes improving communication and reaching agreements with the agencies providing source data for the accounts, such as environment agencies and ministries. Mr. Harper stressed that introduction of SEEA should be a long-term process, to be implemented flexibly and step-by-step taking into consideration the level of statistical development and policy demands in each country.

22. The successful global implementation of SEEA will depend on support provided by the international community.

23. The Session Organizer noted that the SEEA implementation should be a demand-driven process. Success factors for implementation are: a clear demand, good communication and cooperation, reliable source data, established priorities, and good communication of results. Cooperation is important both at national and international levels. SEEA can be potentially used as a framework for different indicator sets, including Green Growth and Sustainable Development Indicators.

24. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Implementation of SEEA is one of the most important tasks in environment statistics. Regardless of the many challenges, SEEA should be seen as an opportunity rather than as a burden;

(b) Many participants emphasized the need for gradual implementation and reuse of existing data in the conditions of current financial constraints. SEEA provides a framework for adding value by organising existing environmental-economic data. Reliable basic environmental data are a prerequisite for the successful implementation of SEEA;

(c) Advocacy is very important for building support to SEEA implementation among governments, the business sector, the academic community and the general public. Statistical offices should focus on good communication, explain how SEEA can be used for policy making and environmental analysis, and guide users to this important data source;

(d) Exchange of experience among countries in SEEA implementation is needed. To help in practical SEEA implementation, it would be as important to discuss failures as it is to share good practices;

(e) Strong international coordination is needed to support countries in SEEA implementation. International organizations can help by providing expert advice, training, technical assistance, preparing guidelines and manuals, and through ongoing advocacy;

(f) Statistical offices should explore how to implement and use the extensions of SEEA, such as ecosystems accounts;

(g) Improving the timeliness of environmental statistics is another important task. An interesting example in this regard is nowcasting the CO₂ emissions as is currently done in the Netherlands.

D. Conclusions and recommendations for follow up work

1. Action taken by the Conference

25. The Conference agreed on the follow-up actions as listed below:

(a) Establish a clear connection between statisticians and the political level in measuring sustainable development. Use the available opportunities for this purpose, for example the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the UNSC Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress;

(b) Prepare an implementation strategy for the Recommendations of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development and develop practical guidance on how to implement the Recommendations;

(c) Continue methodological work on measuring the global dimension and transboundary impacts related to sustainable development, the human and social capital, and measuring sustainable development at regional and sub-national levels. This work could be undertaken through a dedicated Task Force;

(d) Strengthen the governance of and support to the SEEA implementation in collaboration with UNSD taking into account national and regional circumstances;

(e) Develop mechanisms to share good practices and exchange experience in SEEA implementation, in collaboration with UNSD, for example through an electronic forum.

26. The Conference asked the secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions.

IV. Challenges in providing access to micro-data for research purposes

A. Introduction

27. The seminar was organised by Slovenia, New Zealand and the United States. In the opening remarks, the seminar Chair, Ms. I. Krizman, Slovenia, outlined the developments in this field since the first CES seminar on micro-data access in 2003. The approaches in providing access to micro-data have moved from risk avoidance to risk management, with many organizations releasing new micro-data products and services. Demand for micro-data access is growing but resources are limited, so international collaboration is needed to find efficient and innovative solutions in the context of statistical modernisation.

B. Session 1: Drivers for micro-data access

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/27, 28, 32, 33, 35, 41

28. The session was organised by Ms. K. Wallman, United States. It was based on papers by Australia, Estonia, Finland, United Kingdom, Eurostat and OECD.

29. The session addressed the evolving user requirements for micro-data access: who are the key users of micro-data and what drives the increasing needs for micro-data access.

30. Key issues identified by the session organizer included the need to find a balance between the demand for micro-data and concerns about privacy of individuals and businesses. New phenomena such as Big Data and Open Data, new technological solutions, increasing integration of micro-data sets, and growing interest in micro-data by international organizations were all seen as important drivers for developing new approaches to micro-data access. Cross-border micro-data access poses a particular challenge. While this is promoted by some international organizations, there remains a need to improve the legal framework, and find an agreement on sanctions for breaches of confidentiality.

31. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) There is a great need to share ideas and best practices in this field. At the same time, it is challenging to develop a harmonised international approach because national legal requirements are different;

(b) Providing micro-data access can enhance the reputation of statistical organizations with the research community. It can increase the value of statistics for society as researchers often have the knowledge and tools to produce useful analysis based on micro-data. Feedback from users can help improve the quality of the micro-data;

(c) The concept of "open micro-data", and the potential for researchers to integrate different micro-data sets from official statistics and the private sector is seen as both attractive and risky;

(d) There is increasing demand for micro-data for policy decisions in areas such as productivity, competitiveness and income distribution;

(e) Seeking the prior consent of respondents can facilitate making micro-data available to researchers in some countries;

(f) The costs of providing micro-data access can be a major barrier;

(g) Micro-data products and services should be tailored to the different needs of different groups of users;

(h) Integrated micro-data sets bring new challenges in preserving confidentiality. It is not clear yet how to ensure the quality of integrated micro-data sets;

(i) Good quality metadata is essential to allow users to properly understand the data.

32. The session organiser concluded that:

(a) Balancing expectations of users and concerns of respondents is key to success;

(b) Trust is a necessary but not sufficient precondition for the exchange of micro-data between statistical agencies, relevant cooperation mechanisms need to be built over time;

(c) Legal frameworks are important. They need to be defined in advance. Some harmonisation may be possible, particularly in the European Union;

(d) Standard terminology, good documentation and metadata standards are essential preconditions for effective collaboration and sharing best practice in micro-data access;

(e) Micro-data access issues vary between countries and types of users: there is no single solution for all cases;

(f) Society is increasingly computer literate but not necessarily statistically literate. Statisticians need to help users through good documentation, including on micro-data;

(g) Transparency concerning access to micro-data, its availability, the related processes and legal frameworks is essential.

C. Session 2: How should national statistical offices respond – moving from risk avoidance to risk management

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/29–31, 36–40

33. The session was organised by Mr. C. Lynch, New Zealand. It was based on papers by Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Mexico and the Netherlands.

34. The session focused on re-thinking the services on micro-data as part of the business strategy of national statistical offices.

35. The session organizer noted that researchers are likely to be more interested in finding answers to research questions than in access to micro-data for its own sake. Making researchers active partners in risk management could be useful, particularly as they gain more knowledge and experience of working with statistical micro-data. The development of a standard risk analysis framework could be an opportunity for collaboration between organizations.

36. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The need to streamline the different activities and initiatives of international organizations related to providing access to micro-data;

(b) The need for further work on common terminology;

(c) It was suggested that the risk can be reduced by asking the academic institutions to guarantee the confidentiality of data to which their researchers have access. However, this may not be permitted under the legal frameworks operating in some countries. The problematic issue is how to apply the sanctions in case of breach of confidentiality;

(d) Approaches to risk management have to take into account country-specific circumstances;

(e) Researchers can be a useful additional resource for analysing and exploiting the potential of data held by statistical organizations;

(f) Respondents, researchers and tax-payers all have different interests. National statistical organizations find themselves at the centre, trying to balance the needs of these three groups. International collaboration can help to find common solutions;

(g) Several countries informed the Conference about their national practices and experiences in the field of risk management of micro-data access. There was strong interest in the development of new techniques for preserving confidentiality while maximising the statistical value, such as ‘confidentiality on the fly’.

37. The session organiser concluded that much progress has been made in recent years to find an appropriate balance of risk and benefit regarding micro-data access. Researchers should be part of the risk-management process, and micro-data access is increasingly becoming a core product of statistical organizations. Cost recovery for micro-data access services remains an open issue, with various approaches outlined by different countries.

D. Conclusions and recommendations for follow-up work

1. Action taken by the Conference

38. The Conference concluded that providing access to micro-data is a key challenge for all statistical organizations. Whilst some national considerations remain, particularly concerning the legal framework, there has been considerable progress over the last ten years in finding new ways to provide micro-data access to different user groups.

39. The Conference agreed on the follow-up actions as listed below:

(a) Share experience between statistical organizations in managing relationships with users of micro-data and improving the transparency of micro-data access processes;

(b) Develop a “check list” of the different steps for the systematic development of a micro-data access system;

(c) Update the section on good practices in the 2007 publication “Principles and Guidelines for Managing Statistical Confidentiality and Micro-data Access”;

(d) Develop a common risk assessment framework for micro-data access;

(e) Harmonise terminology based on the glossary developed by the OECD Expert Group on micro-data access;

(f) Develop recommendations on quality management and measurement, as well as metadata standards related to micro-data access;

(g) Consider the High-Level Group on the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services as a vehicle to promote the sharing of innovative solutions.

40. The Conference welcomed the rich debates during the seminar and asked the secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions.

V. Work of the High-level Group on the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/2, 20

41. Mr. G. van der Veen (the Netherlands), the Chair of the High-level Group (HLG) on the modernisation of statistical production and services, presented the annual report of the Group focusing on the main achievements and forthcoming priorities. The need for involvement and support by Member States was stressed.

42. The Conference expressed satisfaction with the progress so far, including the development of a Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) and a paper on Big Data. The importance of the two current HLG projects, “Frameworks and Standards for Statistical Modernisation” and “Common Statistical Production Architecture” was underlined.

1. Action taken by the Conference

43. The Conference reviewed and approved the report of the High-Level Group on the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services (HLG), including the current projects and the proposed new governance structure for activities and groups overseen by the HLG.

44. The Conference suggested the following as priorities for international collaboration activities in the area of the modernisation of statistical production and services:

(a) Facilitating the use of Big Data for official statistics;

(b) Legal and licensing issues;

(c) Promoting standards-based modernisation by collecting and publishing success stories, as well as case studies of failures;

(d) Incorporating existing examples of successful software sharing;

(e) Further development of the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, based on the approach proposed by Mexico to the United Nations Statistical Commission. This should take into account any activities undertaken by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA).

45. The national and international statistical organizations were invited to support the work programme of the HLG, and commit resources for its implementation. Several countries expressed a willingness to be involved in the work. The Conference asked the secretariat to explore the modalities through which countries could provide support.

VI. Reports, guidelines, recommendations, etc. prepared under the umbrella of the Conference

A. Conference of European Statisticians’ Recommendations on measuring sustainable development

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/4, Add.1

46. The Conference reviewed the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* (with the working title: *Framework and suggested indicators to measure*

sustainable development) prepared by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development. Prior to the CES plenary session, the secretariat conducted an electronic consultation of the Recommendations with the CES members. All responding countries and organizations supported the Recommendations. Several countries and organizations provided suggestions to improve the text. These were taken into account in the updated version of the Recommendations that was submitted to the Conference.

47. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The Recommendations were considered important for building a bridge between policy makers and statisticians. The document underlines the role of statistical offices in measuring sustainable development and in providing support in monitoring sustainable development policies;

(b) The Recommendations are a timely input to the process of establishing the Sustainable Development Goals as they can help to define the targets and indicators to measure the SDGs. Dissemination and communication actions should be put in place so that the Recommendations receive sufficient attention in the SDG process;

(c) The Recommendations were considered a step forward in harmonizing the measurement of sustainable development. The flexibility to reflect different national needs, provided by the Recommendations, was welcomed. In particular, it was noted that the circumstances facing developing countries may be significantly different from those faced by developed ones. The Recommendations allow taking into account the national circumstances, while striving for comparability at international level;

(d) It would be useful to develop risk indicators related to sustainability, including on financial risk;

(e) Some countries asked for more detailed indicators in specific areas, such as energy;

(f) The document should convey the viewpoint that economic growth can be achieved in line with sustainable development, and that there is no inherent conflict between economic progress and sustainable development.

48. The Conference expressed support to the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* and encouraged countries to implement the Recommendations.

1. Action taken by the Conference

49. The Conference endorsed the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*, subject to the following amendments:

(a) The type of indicators called “policy drivers” will be replaced by “policy relevant indicators”;

(b) The term “non-energy resources” will be replaced by a term consistent with the SEEA.

50. The Conference asked the CES Bureau to review the outcome of the consultation, in particular the suggestions for future work as outlined in section VI of document ECE/CES/2013/4/Add.1, and to decide on the possible next steps such as:

(a) Drafting a strategy for implementing the Recommendations of the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development; considering how to extend this work further in a broader international context;

(b) Pilot testing of indicator sets with a sample of countries. Italy and Australia volunteered to test the indicators;

(c) Developing practical guidance for the implementation of sustainable development indicator sets;

(d) Linking/adjusting the indicator sets to the Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators, once these are defined;

(e) Further work on transboundary impacts in the context of sustainable development, on distributional aspects, and on measurement of risks;

(f) Putting in place promotional and communication activities to promote the Recommendations widely among policy makers and statisticians, and also in other regions;

(g) Ensuring that the SDG process, including the UNSC Friends of the Chair Group, is informed about the Recommendations by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development.

B. A stock-taking report on measuring human capital

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/5, Add.1-3

51. The stock-taking report on measuring human capital was presented to the Conference. OECD and an expert group led by New Zealand prepared the Report as a follow-up to the 2011 CES seminar on Measuring Human Capital. The Report includes recommendations on further work to improve measurement of human capital, including setting up a group to construct experimental human capital satellite accounts. An electronic consultation of the document was carried out prior to the CES 2013 plenary session. All responding countries supported the endorsement of the report by the CES, and acknowledged its value for further work.

1. Action taken by the Conference

52. The Conference endorsed the stock-taking report on measuring human capital.

53. The Conference approved the Terms of Reference for a Task Force on Measuring Human Capital ([ECE/CES/2013/5/Add.3](#)). The national statistical offices and international organizations interested in participating in the work of the Task Force should contact the UNECE secretariat (e-mail: andres.vikat@unece.org).

C. Guidelines for harmonizing time use surveys

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/6, Add.1-2

54. The Conference reviewed the draft *Guidelines for harmonizing time use surveys*, developed by a Task Force on Time Use Surveys, set up in November 2010. An electronic consultation of the document with the CES members was carried out prior to the plenary session of the Conference. The comments by countries and organizations showed broad support to the Guidelines and provided proposals and suggestions for revising and clarifying the text.

1. Action taken by the Conference

55. The Conference welcomed the work of the Task Force on Time Use Surveys on preparing the Guidelines. The Conference requested the Task Force to prepare a revised draft reflecting the comments from the consultation and from the CES plenary session, and present it for endorsement to the October 2013 meeting of the CES Bureau.

56. The Conference requested the CES Bureau to review the proposals for further work as reflected in the Guidelines and the related comments from the consultation, and decide on next steps.

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

A. Poverty statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/7, Add.1-2

57. The Conference discussed an outline of a seminar on poverty statistics, planned to be held on 2-4 December 2013. The proposal to organize the seminar is an outcome of the in-depth review of poverty statistics conducted by the CES Bureau in November 2012. The seminar is expected to discuss how to tackle the many issues and challenges in improving the measurement of poverty in the UNECE region.

58. An electronic consultation on the outcome of the in-depth review on poverty statistics and on the draft seminar outline was carried out prior to the CES plenary session. The responding countries and organizations showed strong support for holding the seminar and provided comments and suggestions on its organization.

59. The aim of the discussion was to seek further input from all CES members for the preparation of the seminar. The following proposals were made in the discussion:

(a) The seminar should consider existing approaches on how to measure wealth and income distribution in general, such as the recent OECD work on household income and wealth;

(b) Integrating and combining data from different sources is important in particular in the context of measuring the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, for which there is a high policy demand. Priorities and trade-offs need to be established between the different user requirements for measuring poverty and inequality;

(c) Measurement of extreme poverty poses a challenge. The seminar could discuss how to integrate and merge different data sources to cover the tails of the income distribution. It could also discuss improving the measurement of income from the non-observed economy;

(d) Additional topics suggested for the seminar included: tools for presenting information on poverty (e.g. simulation models and other tools that could help to understand the impact of policy decisions); how to build weights for the individual household members when using household data; and national experiences in applying conceptual frameworks of poverty measurement;

(e) The Russian Federation, Poland and Italy expressed interest in contributing to the seminar.

1. Action taken by the Conference

60. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the in-depth review on poverty statistics.

61. The Conference supported the organization of the seminar “The way forward in poverty measurement” (2-4 December 2013, Geneva), and requested the secretariat to take into account in the preparation of the seminar the comments received through the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session. A proposal was made to consider organising a high-level seminar on this topic in the future.

B. Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/8, Add.1-2, 9, Add.1-2, 10, Add.1-2

62. The CES plenary session was informed about the outcomes of the recent in-depth reviews on banking, insurance and financial statistics; population ageing; and political

and other community activities, including volunteering. The Bureau carried out the in-depth reviews of the first two topics in November 2012 and the third topic in February 2013. The outcomes of the in-depth reviews were sent for electronic consultation to the CES members. All responding countries and international organizations supported the outcomes of the reviews.

63. The Conference noted the main outcomes of the in-depth reviews as follows:

(a) Banking, insurance and financial statistics: while there would be room for further improvements in alignment of concepts and methods, and strengthening cooperation between national statistical offices and central banks, there is currently no need to launch additional work;

(b) Population ageing: the CES Bureau has established a Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics to improve the availability, accessibility and comparability of statistical data in support of ageing-related policymaking;

(c) Political and other community activities, including volunteering: the topic was included in the list of potential topics for the CES seminars. The CES did not select this topic for the seminars to be organised in 2014. However, the topic will remain on the list for a possible future seminar.

1. Action taken by the Conference

64. The CES plenary session endorsed the outcomes of the in-depth reviews on banking, insurance and financial statistics; population ageing; and political and other community activities, including volunteering, acknowledging the comments received through the electronic consultations.

VIII. Programme of work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics subprogramme

A. Reports of the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau and Teams of Specialists and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2013

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/11, Add.1, 12, 14, 18 and addenda

65. The Conference welcomed the work undertaken by the UNECE Statistical Division in implementing the Statistical Programme for 2012, and reviewed the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2013.

66. The Conference took note of the reports of the CES Bureau meetings, progress reports of the Teams of Specialists working under the auspices of the Conference, and reports from expert meetings.

67. Mr. W. Smith (Canada) drew the attention of the CES plenary session to the interim recommendations on the key directions for the future in climate change related statistics for national statistical offices (ECE/CES/2013/11/Add.1).

68. Mr. M. Kaleta (Poland) presented the compilation of good practices in human resources management and training to the Conference for information. The compilation makes use of selected papers from the CES seminar in 2006 and the related workshops hosted by The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2008, UNECE in 2010 and Hungary in 2012.

1. Action taken by the Conference

69. The Conference expressed support for the work on climate change related statistics, and asked the CES members to review the interim recommendations

(ECE/CES/2013/11/Add.1). Any comments should be sent to the UNECE secretariat (e-mail: anu.peltola@unece.org).

70. The Conference welcomed the compilation of good practices in human resources management and training to be published by UNECE.

71. The Conference approved the report on the implementation of the Statistical Programme for 2012 (ECE/CES/2013/18), and the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2013 (ECE/CES/2013/14), including the list of planned meetings (ECE/CES/2013/18/Add.1).

B. Programme planning documents for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics subprogramme 2014-2015

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/15- 17

72. The Conference reviewed the programme planning documents of the Statistics subprogramme prepared in the context of the United Nations secretariat's biennial planning and reporting cycle. The documents were approved by the CES Bureau at its meeting on 5-6 February 2013.

1. Action taken by the Conference

73. The Conference approved the following documents of the United Nations secretariat's biennial planning and reporting cycle for the Statistics sub-programme: Programme of Work for 2014-2015 (ECE/CES/2013/15); Publications Programme for 2014-2015 (ECE/CES/2013/16); and Biennial Evaluation Plan for 2014-2015 (ECE/CES/2013/17).

IX. Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the 2014 Conference of European Statisticians plenary session

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/13

74. Taking into account the results of the survey carried out among the CES members in April-May 2013 and the recommendation by the CES Bureau, the following topics were selected for the CES seminars in 2014:

A. What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate this value

Seminar organizer: United Kingdom

Session organizers: Sweden and Eurostat

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

B. Migration statistics

Seminar organizer: Mexico in collaboration with UNECE

Session organizers: Norway and Russian Federation (UNSD and CIS-STAT as co-organizers)

Contributions offered by: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, United States (possibly), Eurostat and OECD

75. Countries and international organizations are invited to send their proposals for possible contributions to the seminars to the UNECE secretariat by the end of August 2013. The CES Bureau will discuss the organization of the 2014 CES seminars at its October 2013 meeting.

X. Election of the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

Documentation: ECE/CES/2013/19

76. According to the rules governing the work of the Conference, and based on the proposal put forward by Ms. K. Wallman, the most senior previous Chair of the Conference, the Conference elected the following members to serve on the Bureau for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 terms of office:

Mr. W. Smith (Canada) as Chairperson;

and the following Vice-Chairpersons of the Bureau:

Mr. B. Pink (Australia);

Mr. K. Pesendorfer (Austria);

Ms. M. Bruun (Finland);

Mr. E. Sojo Garza-Aldape (Mexico);

Mr. B. Aydemir (Turkey);

Mr. O. Osaulenko (Ukraine);

Ms. J. Matheson (United Kingdom).

XI. Other business

77. The 2014 CES plenary session will take place during the week of 7-11 April 2014 in Paris, back-to-back with the OECD Statistics Committee meeting.
