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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

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

### Outcome of the in-depth review of population projections

#### Note by the Secretariat

#### Addendum

##### *Summary*

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of population projections, carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2014.

The in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/2015/8), prepared by Canada and the United Kingdom, summarises international statistical activities related to population projections, identifies issues and challenges, and makes recommendations on possible follow-up actions in the area.

The outcome of the in-depth review is submitted to the Conference for endorsement.

## **I. Introduction**

1. Each year, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. These reviews focus on strategic issues and highlight concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.

## **II. In-depth review discussion and decisions by the Bureau**

2. The Bureau carried out an in-depth review of population projections in October 2014 based on the paper by Canada and the United Kingdom (provided as document ECE/CES/2015/8).

3. The following points were raised in the discussion at the CES Bureau meeting:

(a) Various national and international institutions produce an increasing number of population projections. These often lead to different results depending on the methodology and assumptions used, especially concerning migration;

(b) Communication with policymakers, media and other users of population projections is very important. When releasing demographic projections, clear information should be included about the methodology, assumptions and scenarios, and how the results can be used;

(c) A collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users, including communicating uncertainty, would be useful, as there is limited material available in this area;

(d) It was proposed the Secretariat set up a database with metadata about national and international population projections. OECD is willing to share its information on population projections for this purpose;

(e) Eurostat confirmed its support to the regular joint Eurostat-UNECE expert meetings on demographic projections. The meetings provide a forum to discuss the related technical issues but also to connect producers and users of demographic projections.

4. The Bureau decided to set up a task force on population projections to carry out the following tasks: (i) Prepare a collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users; (ii) Provide guidance on the establishment of a UNECE database of metadata about national and international population projections. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to draft the terms of reference for the task force.

5. As a follow-up, the CES Bureau discussed and approved the terms of reference for a Task Force on Population Projections in February 2015 (see Annex I).

## **III. Proposal for the Conference**

6. The Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the outcome of the in-depth review of population projections, and take note of the in-depth review paper by Canada and the United Kingdom (ECE/CES/2015/8).

## **Annex I**

### **Terms of Reference of a Task Force on Population Projections**

#### **I. Background**

1. The UNECE has been active in the field of demographic projections for over 20 years, organizing expert meetings jointly with Eurostat in Mondorf-les-Bains (1994), Perugia (1999), Vienna (2005), Bucharest (2007), Lisbon (2010), and Rome (2013).
2. In October 2014, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) conducted an in-depth review of population projections on the basis of a document prepared by Canada and the United Kingdom (doc. ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/2) and notes by UNECE (2 Add.1) and Turkey by (2 Add.2). The review document presented an overview of issues and challenges related to national and international statistical activities in the field of population projections, and put forward some recommendations for the international statistical community.
3. Following the discussion of the document, the CES Bureau decided to set up a Task Force on population projections to carry out the following tasks: (i) Prepare a collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users; (ii) Provide guidance on the establishment of a UNECE database of metadata about national and international population projections. The CES Bureau also requested the Secretariat to draft the terms of reference for the Task Force (Bureau report, ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/28).

#### **II. Mandate**

4. The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force is created for a period from 2015 to 2017.

#### **III. Objectives**

5. The main objective of the Task Force is to (a) promote the sharing of good practices on communicating population projections and (b) create mechanisms for collecting and disseminating metadata on national and international population projections.

#### **IV. Planned activities and outputs**

6. The Task Force will:
  - (a) Prepare a collection of good practices on communicating population projections to policymakers, media and other users of projections. The expected output is a publication in electronic and possibly in printed format;
  - (b) Guide the Secretariat in establishing a UNECE database of metadata about national and international population projections. The expected output is a database hosted by UNECE (structure and technical platform depending on available resources).

7. For objective (a) – collection of good practices – the Task Force will start its work by collecting all available material on the communication between producers of population projections (focusing on NSOs and International Organizations) and various categories of users, including in particular policymakers and the media. The material would refer to the release of the results of demographic projections, including information about the methodology, assumptions and scenarios and how the results can be used. Examples of other types of communication between producers and users of population projections, such as for instance consultations on users’ needs and/or their satisfaction, would also be considered.

8. The collection of relevant material and information will be based on an internet research and a short questionnaire (to be designed by the Task Force) to be sent to the NSIs of UNECE countries. The Task Force will review the collected material, identify good practices to be considered as useful examples for countries, elaborate on them, and prepare a report containing a series of recommendations. The Task Force should also be responsible for the promotion of the final report through conferences/publications within the limits of available resources.

9. For objective (b) – database of metadata about population projections – the Task Force will provide guidance on the following issues:

(a) selecting the type of information to be included in the database, taking into account its availability (giving priority to the information available from OECD, UN Population Division, Eurostat and possibly other international organizations), relevance, and suitability for presentation in a database;

(b) identifying types of views, queries and other outputs of the database;

(c) establishing mechanisms for regular updating of the database;

(d) promoting the new database when it is launched.

10. For the collection of the material to be included in the database (metadata and possibly other material) the Task Force will use as much as possible material available online. Additional material will be collected from countries for objective (a).

11. The mandate of the Task Force will be limited to certain types of population projections only, although recommendations could well extend to several types of projections not covered explicitly. The following types of projections should be considered within the scope of the Task Force:

(a) Projections made at the national or major regional geography level (projections for local/small scale geographies should be considered out of scope of the Task Force);

(b) Projections of population structure by age and sex, and possibly selected key variables, such as country of birth (other types of projections such as household projections, labour force projections, etc. should be considered out of the scope of the Task Force).

12. The UNECE Secretariat will set up the database on its web infrastructure.

## **V. Timetable**

13. For objective (a) – collection of good practices – the tentative timetable is the following:

Feb-Apr 2015	Collection of material (inputs by Task Force members, internet research) Design of questionnaire for survey
May-Jun 2015	Online survey carried out by UNECE
Jul-Sep 2015	Analysis by Task Force of material collected
Oct-Dec 2015	Selection of good practices Elaboration by Task Force and draft outline of the collection
Jan-Mar 2016	Preparation of the draft collection of good practices
Apr-Jun 2016	Consultations of the draft collection of good practices with experts, possibly discussed at the Eurostat-UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections (tentatively planned in April 2016)
Jul-Sep 2016	Finalization of the draft collection of good practices
Sep 2016	Submission of the draft collection of good practices to the CES Bureau
Oct-Dec 2016	Revision and finalisation of the collection of good practices to take into account comments by the Bureau Electronic consultation among CES members
Jan-June 2017	Finalisation and submission of the collection of good practices to the June 2017 CES plenary session for endorsement

14. For objective (b) – database of metadata about projections – the tentative timetable is the following:

Feb-Apr 2015	Selection of type of information to be included in the database
May-Jun 2015	Collection of data from countries, through online survey
May-Sep 2015	Definition of structure of the database and technical platform (by UNECE)
Oct-Dec 2015	Preparation of functioning prototype version, for testing
Jan-Apr 2016	Testing of the prototype database, and possible presentation at Eurostat- UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections (tentatively planned in April 2016)
May-Jun 2016	Finalisation of the database
Jul-Sep 2016	Final version launched

## **VI. Methods of work**

15. The Task Force will primarily work via email and telephone conferences. The Task Force may have face-to-face meetings on the occasion of meetings attended by a significant number of Task Force members, such as the Eurostat-UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections or the Eurostat Working Party on Demographic Projections.

## **VII. Membership**

16. The following countries and organizations expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Canada (Chair), Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Eurostat, United Nations Population Division, and UNECE. The UNECE Secretariat and Task Force members may invite additional countries to participate in the work, including possibly countries beyond the UNECE region.

17. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Task Force.

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