



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 February 2016

English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-fourth plenary session

Paris, 27-29 April 2016

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

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

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

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Outcome of the in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources

Summary

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources, carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2015.

The in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/2016/6), prepared by Finland and Turkey, gives an overview of the various changes in methodology, sources and technology related to census taking, 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 diversification of population census methodology and sources in October 2015 based on the paper by Finland and Turkey (provided as document ECE/CES/2016/6).

3. The following points were discussed at the CES Bureau meeting:

(a) Considering the increasing use of administrative data and registers in censuses, it is very important to prepare new guidelines on register-based and combined censuses covering operational, practical, technical and legal aspects. This has been requested by many countries;

(b) The new guidelines should cover the use of multiple sources (including the so-called combined censuses) and include methods for measuring coverage and quality of the various sources. The objective should not be to compare the different census taking methods;

(c) In preparing the new guidelines, consideration should be given to existing material and cooperation should be established with ongoing activities, including those conducted under the Eurostat's ESS.VIP.ADMIN project (part of ESS Vision 2020) on the assessment of the quality of administrative sources;

(d) There was general support to the organization of regional training workshops in the areas identified in the in-depth review paper, including: internet response; use of geographic information systems (GIS), mobile devices and other technology; methods for ensuring data confidentiality when disseminating small area data; methods to give access to microdata to researchers; and assessing quality of administrative sources.

4. The Bureau supported the preparation of new guidelines on the use of registers for population and housing censuses. A Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses should be set up for this purpose, taking into account the comments above. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to draft the terms of reference for the task force, and updated terms of reference for the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses.

5. As a follow-up, the CES Bureau discussed and approved the terms of reference for the two groups in February 2016 (see the annexes).

III. Proposal for the Conference

6. The Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the outcome of the in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources, including the terms of reference of the two groups, and take note of the in-depth review paper by Finland and Turkey (ECE/CES/2016/6).

Annex I

Terms of Reference for the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses

1. Background

1. Between 2012 and 2015 the UNECE Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses coordinated the preparation of the *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing*. The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group and nine Task Forces working on the new recommendations were approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in November 2012 (CES/BUR/2012/NOV/7).
2. The CES adopted the new recommendations for the 2020 round in June 2015. The new recommendations are available in electronic form on the UNECE website¹.
3. In October 2015, the CES Bureau conducted an in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources based on a paper by Finland and Turkey (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/3), and a note by UNECE (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/3Add.1). As an outcome of the review, the Bureau decided to promote the preparation of new guidelines on the use of registers for population and housing censuses, and supported the organization of regional training workshops in the following areas: internet response; use of GIS, mobile devices and other technology; data protection methods for disseminating small area data; methods to give access to microdata to researchers; assessing quality of administrative sources.
4. The Bureau also requested the Secretariat to prepare the terms of reference for the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses and for a new Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses, for review by the Bureau in February 2016 (Report of the Bureau meeting: ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/21).
5. This note presents the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group for the period 2016-2019.

2. Mandate and reporting

6. The Steering Group works under the mandate of the CES, and reports to the CES and its Bureau. The Steering Group reports on its progress to the CES Bureau at least every 18 months.
7. The Terms of Reference of the Steering Group will be reviewed by the CES Bureau in autumn 2019.

3. Objective

8. The main objective of the Steering Group is to coordinate, provide advice and contribute to the UNECE programme on population and housing censuses, aimed at

¹ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41398&L=0>

supporting UNECE member countries in the preparations for the censuses of the 2020 round and the implementation of the CES Recommendations for the 2020 censuses of population and housing.

4. Planned activities and outputs

9. The following activities and outputs are planned:

(a) Act as organizing committee for the Joint UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meetings on Censuses, aimed at facilitating the exchange of experiences among countries on census methodology, technology, census content, and other issues related to the implementation of the CES Recommendations for the 2020 census round;

(b) Support the Secretariat for the organization (in cooperation with CIS-Stat and possibly other organizations) of regional workshops for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), and in South-East Europe, primarily in the following areas: internet response; use of GIS, mobile devices and other technology; data protection methods for disseminating small area data; methods to give access to microdata to researchers; assessing quality of administrative sources. The workshops should preferably take place back-to-back to the UNECE-Eurostat expert meetings in order to facilitate the participation of national experts in all events;

(c) Coordinate the work of the new Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses whose expected output is a publication with provisional title “UNECE Guidelines on Register-Based and Combined Censuses” (see Annex II);

(d) Ensure coordination and avoid duplication with the activities of the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, promoted by the United Nations Statistics Division, and those of Eurostat for the 2021 EU Census Programme

5. Method of work

10. The Steering Group is expected to work in English only, mainly by e-mail and occasionally by telephone conference. The UNECE Census Wiki can be used by the Steering Group to share material, develop documents, and organize discussion forums.

11. Informal meetings of the Steering Group can be organized on the occasion of expert meetings attended by a significant number of members of the Steering Group, such as the Joint UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meetings on Censuses.

6. Membership

12. The Steering Group includes representatives of the following countries and international organizations: Armenia, Canada (Chair), Finland, France, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, CIS-STAT, UNECE, UNSD, UNFPA. The secretariat is provided by UNECE.

Annex II

Terms of Reference for the Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses

1. Background

1. In October 2015, the CES Bureau conducted an in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources based on a paper by Finland and Turkey (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/3), and a note by UNECE (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/3Add.1). As an outcome of the review, the Bureau decided to promote the preparation of new guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to prepare the terms of reference for a new Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses, for review by the Bureau in February 2016 (Report of the Bureau meeting: ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/21).

2. This note presents the terms of reference for the Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses.

2. Mandate and reporting

3. The Task Force reports to the UNECE Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses, which in turn reports to the Conference of European Statisticians and its Bureau.

3. Objective

4. The objective of the Task Force is to prepare new *UNECE Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses*, covering operational, practical, technical and legal aspects. The new guidelines should cover the use of multiple sources (including the so-called combined censuses) and include methods for measuring coverage and quality of the various sources, without specific focus on the comparability of the various census methods.

4. Planned activities and outputs

5. The Task Force is expected to prepare a set of Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses. The planned output is a publication in electronic and printed format, in English and possibly in Russian (subject to availability of resources), to be finalized by December 2017.

6. The Task Force will start its work by collecting available material on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses. In particular, the Task Force should consider the publication “Register-based statistics in the Nordic

countries”², the relevant text in the new recommendations for the 2020 round, and the papers prepared in the last years for UNECE expert meetings on censuses, describing the preparation and conduction of register-based and combined censuses³.

7. The Task Force should also establish cooperation with relevant ongoing activities, including in particular those conducted under Eurostat’s ESS.VIP.ADMIN project (part of ESS Vision 2020) on the assessment of the quality of administrative sources.

8. The available material should be reviewed, expanded and integrated with new text, in order to produce a comprehensive document covering the following topics (the list is tentative and not exhaustive):

- Definitions of register-based and combined censuses, and description of the methods more commonly adopted in the 2010 and previous rounds;
- How to assess the coverage and quality of registers and administrative data, and how to decide if and how they can be used for the population and housing census;
- Advantages, disadvantages, and necessary conditions for register-based and combined censuses;
- Transition from traditional census to combined or register-based censuses;
- Methods for assessing the quality of register-based and combined censuses.

9. The Task Force should use as much as possible for its activities the information available on national census practices, availability and use of data from registers and administrative sources, and plans for the 2020 round, including in particular the information collected by UNECE in the 2013 and 2015 surveys on population and housing censuses. If necessary for its activities, the Task Force may collect, through the UNECE, additional information from member countries, minimizing the burden on NSIs.

10. The Guidelines should present good practices identified by the Task Force which could be used as examples by other countries. The guidelines may also include additional recommendations that would complement those already provided in the CES Recommendations for the 2020 censuses.

5. Methods of work

11. The task force is expected to work in English only, mainly by e-mail and telephone conferences. The UNECE Census Wiki platform can be used by the Task Force to share work material, develop documents, and possibly organize discussion forums.

12. No face-to-face meetings of the task force are planned. However, informal meetings of the task force could be organized in connection with Joint UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meetings on Censuses, or other events attended by a significant number of members of the task force.

²
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/Register_based_statistics_in_Nordic_countries.pdf

³
<http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/censuses/Collection+of+papers+on+transitions+to+new+census+methods>

6. Timetable

Feb 2016	Establish the Task Force and draft detailed work plan with activities, timing and division of work
Mar-Apr 2016	Collect and review available material
Apr-July 2016	Prepare outline of the Guidelines, and first draft chapters
Sep 2016	Present progress report at UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses
Oct 2016-Jun 2017	Revise draft and prepare complete draft Guidelines
Sep 2017	Present draft Guidelines at UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses
Sep-Dec 2017	Revise draft Guidelines based on discussion at Expert Meeting
Dec 2017	Submit final draft Guidelines for review by CES Bureau in February 2018
Feb 2018	Review of draft Guidelines by CES Bureau
Feb-Mar 2018	Electronic consultation among all CES members
Apr 2018	Expected endorsement by the CES plenary session

7. Membership

13. The following countries and organizations participate in the work of the task force: Austria, Estonia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands (Chair), New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, FAO and UNECE. The secretariat is provided by UNECE.