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**Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe:
Programme planning documents for the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission
for Europe**

Statistical Programme 2020

Note by the Secretariat¹

Summary

The document presents the statistical programme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for 2020. It is closely linked to the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2020 (ECE/CES/2019/15), adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2019 and approved by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in December 2019.

The Statistical Programme for 2020 was approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its October 2019 meeting. The document is presented to the Conference for adoption.

The list of meetings held or planned to be held in 2020 is annexed to this document.

¹ This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

A. Purpose of this document

1. This document presents the activities that the Statistical Division of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will carry out in 2020. The document is in line with the Programme of Work for 2020, which is the main official document in the United Nations' planning and budgeting system providing the basis for allocating the budget and planning the necessary United Nations support services for the substantive work programmes.

2. While the official work programme presents the work at an aggregated level, the current document describes the work in more detail, explaining:

- The main activities in 2020
- Why the activities are needed, and the issues they address
- The expected results and impact of these activities.

B. Objective and strategy of the Statistical Division of UNECE

3. According to the UN proposed programme budget for 2020 (A/74/6 (Sect.20)), the objective of the Statistical Division of UNECE is "to advance official statistics at the national and international levels". This objective encompasses all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since it is designed to enable improved monitoring across all policy areas.

4. UNECE strives to achieve this objective through four interconnected streams of work carried out in close cooperation with UNECE member States (see Figure 1): (1) streamlining international statistical work in the UNECE region; (2) methodological work to develop and promote guidelines and recommendations to enhance the quality of statistics; (3) capacity development, in particular to measure progress towards SDGs; and (4) the UNECE statistical database. The work of the Statistical Division of UNECE is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) to ensure that it focuses on the priorities of member countries. It is carried out in close cooperation with other international organizations active in statistics, such as the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD). The work also responds to the guidance provided by the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) and global initiatives of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC).

5. UNECE EXCOM most recently considered the work of CES in December 2019. Members of EXCOM appreciated the work carried out under CES to promote high-quality, trustworthy statistics and data, which are fundamental for good governance and evidence-based policymaking. Countries noted that they benefit greatly from working with CES, mentioning in particular the areas of modernization of statistical systems, measuring progress towards achieving SDGs, migration, poverty, quality of employment and national accounts, especially in the context of digital economy, globalization, sustainability and well-being. It was emphasized that the work under CES often lays the ground for the global work and leads to the development of norms and standards at the global level. Members of EXCOM also commended the effective use of results-oriented teams of experts.

Figure 1.

Interconnected work streams of the Statistical Division of UNECE

6. UNECE supports the streamlining of international statistical work in the region by providing the secretariat for CES.

7. Guided by the priorities and needs of the member States expressed through CES, UNECE carries out methodological work by establishing and servicing teams of national experts to develop international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices.

8. Upon the request of member States, UNECE assesses gaps in national statistical systems of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and undertakes capacity development activities to support the implementation of international guidelines and standards, with a particular focus on the guidelines developed under CES.

9. Finally, UNECE operates a statistical database focusing on areas of high political importance, including SDGs, offering insights into both policy issues and measurement challenges. Gaps or areas of limited harmonization in the database enable identification of priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and help UNECE in targeting support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

10. All CES work is guided by the United Nations *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*², a standard developed by CES and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014 (resolution A/RES/68/261).

11. UNECE statistical work is strongly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a follow-up and review of the achievement of the goals and targets “based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”³.

12. UNECE works on statistics for SDGs in three main ways. First, it supports national statistical offices in their role as coordinators and providers of statistics for SDGs. Second, it undertakes methodological and national statistical capacity development work in demographic, social, economic, and environment statistics, supporting the production of statistics and indicators for measuring and guiding progress towards SDGs in specific subject areas. The collection and dissemination of data on SDG indicators constitute the third

² See: <http://www.unecce.org/stats/archive/docs.fp.e.html>

³ See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>, para. 74

component of this work. In 2020, UNECE will launch a regional knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs, including a platform providing data on SDGs for the UNECE countries.

C. UNECE Statistical Division and Conference of European Statisticians in the international statistical community

13. UNECE provides the secretariat for CES, which is the highest-level intergovernmental statistical body of the UNECE region and a platform for the regional coordination of international statistical work.

14. CES comprises the Heads of national statistical offices of 56 UNECE Member states, OECD member countries and some other countries outside the region (for example, Brazil, China, Mongolia and South Africa). According to the Rules governing the work of CES, any United Nations Member State which regularly participates in CES activities can become a member. The Heads of statistical services of international agencies also participate actively in CES work.

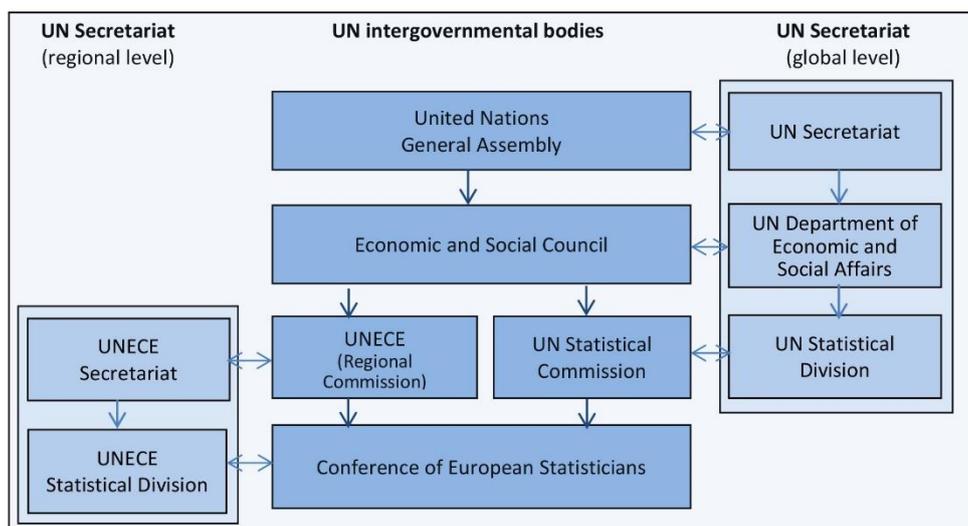
15. CES and its Bureau pay particular attention to avoiding duplication of work with other international organizations in the region, and to making efficient use of available resources. CES undertakes work on emerging topics to support the development of statistics and brings together experts to develop products, such as statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of good practice, which often have a global impact. Through CES countries share resources for statistical development by exchanging expertise and using an international pool of experts.

16. As the secretariat of CES, the UNECE statistical work is driven by the priorities of CES member countries, as well as by the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission. All regional commissions, including the UNECE Secretariat, report to the United Nations Statistical Commission about statistical activities in their region.

17. In addition, general guidance is given by UNECE EXCOM, which consists of government representatives of the UNECE member countries, and by the UN Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

18. A diagrammatic representation of the Statistical Division of UNECE and CES within the United Nations institutional structure is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Conference of European Statisticians and the UNECE Statistical Division in the United Nations intergovernmental structure



19. UNECE cooperates closely with other international and supranational organizations active in the international statistical community, such as OECD, Eurostat, EFTA, CIS-STAT, IMF, the World Bank, as well as United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, related organizations or other United Nations bodies wherever relevant.

20. The contribution of UNECE to international statistical activities is guided by the priorities and needs of the CES members. The region is diverse, comprising both developed and developing statistical systems. This diversity provides a good basis to deal with new and emerging issues while ensuring that the results of the work are applicable in countries with different levels of statistical development. The exchange of knowledge, practices, new developments and challenges provided by CES is enriching to all participants. There are several examples of issues that have first been raised in the countries with developing statistical systems which have turned out to also be of high interest to countries with more advanced systems, and which have resulted in tools that are useful for all countries in the region (e.g. the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Generic Law of Official Statistics).

II. Annual programme of work

21. In 2020 UNECE statistical work will focus on the following priorities: statistics for SDGs; economy and globalization; population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality; environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters; modernization of official statistics, and strategic and managerial issues. Capacity development will focus on areas highlighted by assessments of statistical systems.

A. Streamlining international statistical work in the UNECE region

22. Coordination of international statistical work in the region is a key task for CES. The aims of this coordination are to avoid duplication of work, find synergies, use resources efficiently and reduce the burden on national statistical offices. CES and its Bureau regularly discuss statistical work in the region, carry out in-depth reviews and organize seminars to explore foundational issues and emerging topics in official statistics. At its annual plenary session, CES endorses the main outputs, guidelines and recommendations prepared under its work programme.

23. The main topics at the annual CES plenary sessions are selected by member countries and discussed in two seminar sessions. The first seminar in 2020 will involve strategic reflections on “Impacts of globalization and digitalization on the future of economic statistics”. Globalization and digitalization have a massive impact on economic statistics. In particular the activities of multinational enterprise groups (MNEs) illustrate the challenges faced by official statistics in adequately covering cross-border phenomena and, consequently, ensuring the quality and information value of major economic indicators. The seminar will discuss issues arising from globalization and digitalization, and opportunities around international data exchange among MNEs.

24. The second main topic at the 2020 CES plenary session will be “New roles for national statistical agencies and geospatial agencies in emerging national data ecosystems”. This part of CES will be organised in a joint session with the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe). The seminar will explore the implications of the development of national data ecosystems for national statistical and geospatial agencies. It will consider the perspectives of both communities with a view to identifying areas of common interest, as well as common issues, where the communities can work together more closely in the future.

25. In 2020, the Conference will also discuss a third topic: “Better measurement of digital transformation”. The discussion will consider measuring the impact of digitalisation on the economy and well-being more generally, beyond national accounts.

26. The CES Bureau will steer the statistical work under the Conference and will meet twice in 2020 to review selected statistical areas in depth, such as measuring well-being in

the era of “digital society”, subjective poverty measures, and role of the statistical community in climate action. Some of the in-depth reviews carried out earlier by the Bureau will lead to follow-up work in 2020:

- Countries are increasingly setting up various types of satellite accounts to meet user information needs. However, there is a great need to harmonize these accounts and to ensure that they follow existing international standards. UNECE will launch work to develop an online inventory of published satellite accounts and to develop a general guide to satellite accounting (subject to Bureau decision in October 2019).
- Integrating statistical and geospatial data, particularly in the context of statistics for SDGs, has increasing importance. Improving skills and access to data is an essential requirement for progress. Following up on the in-depth review of using satellite imagery and Earth observation technology in official statistics, UNECE may undertake work in this area and develop closer partnerships between the statistical and geospatial communities. A joint session of the Conference and the UN-GGIM: Europe will be held in 2020.

27. The CES Bureau is the custodian of the widely used *Classification of Statistical Activities*. The latest version of the classification dates from 2009. In 2020, UNECE will initiate a review of the classification to take into account the emergence of new statistical areas, such as climate change-related statistics and statistics on governance.

B. Methodological work on statistical standards, guidelines and recommendations

28. The aim of the methodological work is to develop and promote international standards, guidelines and recommendations to respond to countries’ demands to improve the quality and comparability of official statistics and efficiency of statistical production.

29. The methodological work is conducted by teams of specialists set up by CES or its Bureau for a particular task with concrete terms of reference, membership, output, timeframe and a sunset clause. The Statistical Division of UNECE convenes, mobilizes and manages these groups, working with them to facilitate turning their knowledge and experience into international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices. UNECE acts as the secretariat for the teams and provides tools such as wikis (which allow common working spaces and discussion forums) and teleconferences to connect experts and foster collaboration. Some teams of specialists use modern working methods such as sprints to deliver results in a short time frame.

30. To ensure their high quality and relevance, all standards, recommendations and guidelines developed by these CES teams of specialists are opened for consultation among all CES members (close to 70 countries from the UNECE region and beyond) before endorsement by the Conference.

31. The following seven task forces finalized their work and plan to submit their recommendations for endorsement to the CES plenary session in 2020: population and housing censuses beyond 2020; use of longitudinal data for migration statistics; communicating gender statistics; measuring intra-household power and decision-making; disaggregated poverty measures; exchange and sharing of economic data, set of core climate-change related statistics.

1. Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

32. The statistical work of UNECE encompasses and supports all SDGs, supporting national statistical offices to facilitate country-led reporting of statistics for SDGs. In addition, work will continue in 2020 to build a regional platform for data on SDG indicators.

33. The United Nations General Assembly resolution *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*⁴ (the 2030 Agenda) calls for a country-led follow-up

⁴ A/RES/70/1

and review process that will be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated (para 74g of 2030 Agenda).

34. National statistical offices are responsible for providing data and coordinating annual reporting of 232 indicators for the 17 SDG goals and 169 targets. Fifty agencies across the United Nations system and beyond (the custodian agencies) are charged with receiving and harmonizing these national statistics and preparing regional and global aggregates for the global SDG database maintained by the United Nations Statistical Division, and for inclusion in the United Nations Secretary General's annual report on progress towards SDGs.⁵ This requires unprecedented coordination in statistical methodology, data flows and communication that cuts across goals and thematic domains.

35. UNECE work in this area is steered and coordinated through the CES Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs. Its flagship publication, the *CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs* (UNECE, 2017)⁶ is widely used by countries and international organizations alike. UNECE is currently developing a second edition of the Road Map to reflect new information, lessons learned, and emerging challenges, to be released in 2021. UNECE is also setting up a knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs where more detailed information about its work in this area, as well as useful resources for experts, will be available⁷.

36. Drawing on UNECE practical guidance for online national reporting platforms (NRPs) for statistics for SDGs⁸, an increasing number of countries are developing such platforms to provide national data for the SDG indicators. The work will continue to facilitate SDG data transmission from NRPs to custodian agencies through exchanging knowledge and experiences in using the Application Programming Interface (API) and the Standard for Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX).

37. A Task Team on communicating statistics for SDGs will prepare guidance on how countries can most effectively communicate SDG statistics to stakeholders, including through the Voluntary National Reviews to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

38. A Task Team on statistical capacity development has prepared a matrix as a self-assessment tool for statistical offices to identify their needs and priorities for capacity development. The matrix can be shared with potential donors to ensure that the capacity development matches countries' needs. The Task Team will test the matrix and incorporate the guidance and lessons learned in using the matrix into the second edition of the Road Map. This work aligns with the UNECE statistical capacity development strategy endorsed by CES in 2018. It will be used in a demand-driven and modular way, to develop practical solutions.

39. New work has been undertaken to set up a regional platform for data on SDG indicators as a response to requests from two sources. The first of these is the UN Development System reform, which calls for consolidation of existing data and statistics capacities in regions, and for the development of coherent regional data ecosystems. The second is the decision of the UNECE session in April 2019 to consider progress towards SDGs at the annual Regional Fora on Sustainable Development based on a regional statistical report using existing data sets and statistics. A dashboard of selected SDG indicators, most representative for the countries in the region, will quickly and easily provide information on the UNECE countries' progress in achieving SDGs to a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats. The data will be stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata.

⁵ See: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/progress-report/>.

⁶ See: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2017/ECECESSTAT20172.pdf>. The Road Map is available also in Russian and Spanish.

⁷ <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/Statistics+for+SDGs+Home> [to be replaced with new link when it becomes available]

⁸ As of August 2019, 47 countries within UNECE CES have or plan to set up an NRP or other type of web platform for disseminating national data on SDG indicators.

40. The Statistical Division also undertakes methodological work and national statistical capacity development on demographic, social, economic, and environment statistics to inform policy decisions related to SDGs. The thematic work is described below in the respective sections throughout the document with reference to those SDGs whose measurement the work supports.

2. Economy and globalization

41. UNECE works with countries to apply international standards and recommendations to improve the quality and comparability of economic statistics, which are a prerequisite for the compilation of many global SDG indicators, including all those with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the denominator. The main priority areas for 2020 include measuring economic growth, well-being and sustainability; globalization; statistical business registers and entrepreneurship; quality of employment; human capital; prices; and leading, composite and sentiment indicators.

42. UNECE promotes the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) to enable the provision of high-quality data for economic analysis and policies under the Global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA, and contributes to the global SNA research agenda on measuring globalization, digitalization, well-being and sustainability. In 2020, UNECE will advance methodological work on measuring human capital, global production arrangements and exchange of economic data, which are closely related to the priority areas of the SNA research agenda. UNECE will also continue to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South East Europe (SEE) in cooperation with other regional partners. As a follow-up to previous activities, a special session and a workshop for EECCA and SEE countries will be organized in 2020 to promote joint work among statistical offices, central banks and/or ministries of finance on the consistency and overall quality of economic statistics.

43. Better measures are needed to assess how skills and knowledge acquired through education and training influence economic growth and productivity. In 2019 a CES Task Force completed a Compilation Guide, which aims to help countries construct internationally comparable Satellite Accounts on Education and Training. In 2020 UNECE will facilitate the use of the Guide in countries, which will ultimately lead to improved cost-based measurement of human capital. The Group of Experts on National Accounts will provide a forum to share experience and best practice in this area, and will contribute to the development of more general guidance for national statistical offices on the production of satellite accounts that meet various user needs.

44. In a globalized world, enterprises operate in complex value chains that span multiple countries, making “national” accounting increasingly challenging. The exchange of economic data between countries is, therefore, becoming a necessity, as identified in the *Guide to Measuring Global Production* (UNECE, 2015). In 2020, a CES Task Force will finalize the guidance, tools and principles for the exchange of economic data based on enablers and obstacles identified in a review of current data exchange practices. An important part of the work will be support to the network of experts on large and complex enterprises to share best practices in working with multinational enterprise groups and collecting data on their global activities.

45. UNECE will continue to collaborate with other international expert groups dealing with the impact of globalization on economic statistics, such as the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics; the UN Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics; the Integrated Global Accounts project of Eurostat, and various OECD expert groups.

46. UNECE, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD and other partners, promotes the implementation of international recommendations on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which plays an important role in policymaking and is widely used for indexation of wages, pensions and social security allowances. The biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on CPI in June 2020 will discuss a range of topics, including new data sources for CPI, the role of CPI in measuring the digital economy and welfare, methodological issues and meeting user needs.

As part of the ECASTAT programme on capacity development in economic statistics, a special session will be organized for the EECCA and SEE countries.

47. Together with Eurostat and OECD, UNECE supports the development of statistical business registers which are indispensable for efficient data collection and production of economic statistics. UNECE will continue to support the implementation of the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* (UNECE, 2015) and *Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics* (UNECE, 2019) in national statistical offices. UNECE will begin preparation of the biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Business Registers that will take place in 2021, organized jointly with Eurostat and OECD. A special session will discuss the challenges in producing statistical business registers in EECCA and SEE countries.

48. UNECE, jointly with Eurostat, ILO and OECD, leads the international work on measuring quality of employment which aims to respond to the demand for data on the qualitative aspects of employment beyond traditional labour force statistics. Based on the meeting of the Group of Experts on Measuring Quality of Employment in November 2019, a UNECE Steering Group on this topic will revise the *Handbook on Measuring the Quality of Employment* (UNECE, 2015) to reflect revisions of ILO standards, country experiences and emerging issues.

49. Leading, composite and sentiment indicators make it possible to shed light on aspects of the economy and society which traditionally have not been covered by official statistics, for instance through compilation of leading indicators for economic development and composite indicators measuring well-being. In 2019 CES adopted the *Guidelines on producing leading, composite and sentiment indicators* to guide NSOs. In 2020, subject to the decision of the CES Bureau, UNECE will initiate follow-up activities in this area to develop further guidance for countries, including providing a forum for exchange of experience and learning from each other.

3. Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequalities

50. UNECE develops statistical methods in areas of high policy relevance to respond to increasing demand for data on people's well-being, social environment and demographic change. The work in 2020 will focus on poverty and inequalities, migration, gender and population censuses. Many challenges relate to the need to increase the use of administrative data and to measure hard-to-reach population groups. This area of work is of particular importance for monitoring progress towards SDGs since many indicators require population data in the denominator and should be disaggregated by sex, migratory status and other variables.

51. UNECE supports countries' preparations for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, which represent the very foundation of statistical systems. Censuses provide the baseline information on population and housing stock, which is used to plan public infrastructure and services, and to produce SDG indicators and many other statistics where population is the denominator. Censuses cover the entire population and allow the production of statistics for various small population groups whose measurement is essential to ensure that "no one is left behind" in working towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

52. The resolution of the Economic and Social Council *2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme* provides a global mandate for this work. There are increasing concerns over costs, data quality, respondent burden and privacy, which call for new and more efficient methodological solutions. To address these concerns, in 2020 UNECE will organize an expert meeting and a workshop to support implementation of the *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses* (UNECE, 2015), with a focus on the modernization of census methodology and technology. Since an increasing number of countries plan to use administrative sources in the 2020 census round, a UNECE task force is preparing *Guidance on the measurement of the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses*. The CES Steering Group on Censuses will complete an in-depth analysis of the future of population and housing censuses after the 2020 round.

53. UNECE promotes exchange of experience and methodological work on measuring poverty and inequalities. Measuring progress towards SDGs on the reduction of **poverty** (Goal 1) and inequalities (Goal 10) requires comparable data and a coherent set of indicators. In 2020, UNECE will hold an expert meeting dealing with the application of the *Guide on Poverty Measurement* (UNECE, 2017), regional needs for new methodological work, and challenges in measuring the SDG indicators on poverty and inequality. The task forces on disaggregated poverty measures and on measuring social exclusion will complete their work in 2020. UNECE will continue to promote the use of the harmonized survey module for measuring poverty in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

54. UNECE aims to improve the availability, quality and international comparability of migration statistics. This responds to the strong demand for collecting and using data on migration, expressed, among others, in the first objective of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. Ten SDG indicators are directly related to migration and a further 24 need to be disaggregated by migratory status. The 2020 UNECE work session on migration statistics will discuss changes in the definitions of various categories of migrants, integration of data from multiple sources, use of longitudinal data for measuring migration, and measurement of hard-to-reach groups of migrants. A task force will complete the guidelines on how to incorporate longitudinal data into annual migration statistics. To enhance the use and exchange of migration data, UNECE will continue to update and improve its *Clearing House on Migration Statistics*. A further test will be carried out of the harmonized survey module for measuring migration and remittances in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

55. UNECE work on gender statistics aims to share knowledge and experience and to develop capacity in areas where data and indicators of gender equality are insufficient or lacking. Better gender statistics is needed for the monitoring of SDGs, particularly to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5). In measuring women's power and decision-making, statistics are almost entirely limited to the public sphere of life, while the policy frameworks also include decision-making in the sphere of families and households that is not covered in such statistics. In 2020, two task forces will complete their work on developing guidance for statistical offices: on measuring the gendered dimensions of intra-household power and decision-making, and on the communication of gender statistics to policymakers and the public. A team of experts is also analysing emerging practices in measuring gender identity. UNECE will continue to promote the national application of its *toolkit for training users of gender statistics*.

4. Environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters

56. UNECE activities in this domain aim to improve statistics that are of high relevance to environment policies and required to derive many SDG indicators. The main priorities in 2020 will include climate change-related statistics and indicators, environment statistics, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and statistics related to hazardous events and disasters.

57. Among the three pillars of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – data availability for the environmental pillar is the lowest. UN Environment estimates that for about 68 per cent of the environment-related SDG indicators there is insufficient data, making it very difficult to assess progress and understand the challenges that ecosystems are facing, or the relationship between the environment and people. Providing data on environment-related SDGs (such as Goals 6, 14 and 15) is a challenge for all countries, especially those with less developed statistical systems.

58. A Joint Task Force of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and CES will support the improvement of the production and quality of environment statistics in EECCA and SEE countries, in line with the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. In 2020, the task force will continue to review these guidelines to align them with SDG indicators, the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and SEEA. The Statistical Division of UNECE, in close collaboration with the Environment Division of UNECE, will continue to support countries to produce and share environment statistics and indicators on a regular basis. The work contributes to the pan-European Shared

Environmental Information System and is carried out in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, Eurostat and UNSD. The possibility of linking the Shared Environmental Information System with national SDG reporting platforms will be examined.

59. UNECE supports the use of the global System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in the region, jointly with OECD. This includes building capacity in support of SEEA, providing a forum for exchange of knowledge and experience, assessing data availability and developing methods and sources for the necessary data. The work in 2020 will focus on implementation of SEEA in the context of SDGs, climate change and other policy applications, as well as identifying new techniques and data sources for compiling SEEA accounts, communication strategies and coordination of work in the region. The Statistical Division of UNECE will also carry out training workshops and advisory missions to build capacity in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

60. Work to improve official statistics for climate change analysis involves statisticians and partners from the climate community, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In 2020, UNECE will organize an Expert Forum to discuss progress towards implementing the *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-related Statistics* (UNECE, 2014) in response to the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and SDG 13. The UNECE Steering Group will continue to support countries in developing road maps to put the *CES Recommendations* into practice, and will collect related good practices to be shared on a wiki platform. A specific focus of work in 2020 will be to contribute to identifying indicators and statistics on climate change adaptation. Another focus will be supporting countries in the implementation of the set of core climate change-related indicators which was identified by a UNECE task force.

61. UNECE brings together statisticians and disaster risk experts, including from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), to develop official statistics for hazardous events and disasters. The *Recommendations on the Role of Official Statistics in Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters* were endorsed by CES in June 2019. The Recommendations identify practical steps that NSOs, in coordination with national agencies responsible for disaster management, can take to support disaster management and risk reduction. The Recommendations also include a list of follow-up activities, including the need for more guidance on statistical operationalization of terms, definitions and classifications used in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the establishment of a regional forum for exchange of knowledge and experience. In 2020 the work will focus on supporting the implementation of the Recommendations, and statistical operationalization of important terms, definitions and classifications.

62. Waste statistics are of high policy interest in the context of SDGs, green economy, resource efficiency, circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and many other policy areas. However, there are important conceptual and methodological problems in this area that lead to incomparability of data. There is no international classification of waste statistics outside the European Union. Important aspects of waste management related to informal and illegal activities are not included in official waste statistics and are difficult to capture in statistics. To improve the situation, a UNECE task force, involving experts from countries, professional and international organizations (such as the Basel Convention Secretariat, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD) is developing a conceptual framework for waste statistics. The framework will provide a basis for harmonizing the concepts and definitions, developing standard classifications and providing methodological guidance to provide better quality information for important waste-related policies.

5. Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics

63. The first Fundamental Principle states that “official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data [...]. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens’ entitlement to public information.” To be able to honour this commitment, official statistics need a strong legal and institutional basis. As the

landscape of information producers is rapidly changing, the legislative and institutional infrastructure must support the development of new business models, engagement in partnerships and use of new data sources and technologies to allow modernization of official statistics, and permit the removal of unnecessary barriers to releasing the full value of statistics. Common standards and practices rarely exist in this area of work. UNECE activities in this domain aim to strengthen the responsiveness, accountability and transparency of statistical institutions to ensure access to high quality information, as enshrined in SDGs (Goal 16).

64. In 2020, UNECE will continue to promote and disseminate the CES *Guidance on modernizing statistical legislation* (UNECE, 2018) to enable continuous development of statistical systems, guarantee independence and accountability, and ensure data security and high quality of statistics. The first UNECE/Eurostat Expert Meeting on modernizing statistical legislation will aim to collect experience and best practices, and discuss emerging issues posing challenges to statistical legislation, including those identified by the CES teams of specialists in their respective working areas. The meeting will also ensure continued joint working of experts on statistical legal frameworks, and collaboration between UNECE and other international organizations in this area. In addition, the meeting will identify what other supporting materials and practical guidance are needed to strengthen and employ statistical legislation.

65. Following up on the *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics* (UNECE, 2017), in 2020 UNECE will continue pilot testing the approaches to measure the value of official statistics with interested countries. UNECE will update the wiki platform with best practices to share results of countries' innovative work. The best practices are intended to inspire statistical offices to increase the value of statistics, and the pilot testing, in turn, will help to demonstrate that value in concrete terms. A task force will work to refine and develop the measurement framework to provide more detailed guidance to countries wishing to use it to value their products.

66. The growing importance of integrating statistical and geospatial information calls for closer partnerships between geospatial experts and statisticians. An Economic and Social Council resolution (E/2016/L.28) "requests that the regional commissions provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)." In 2020, UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe will continue to promote dialogue between national bodies responsible for geospatial and statistical information. In 2020, further joint activities are envisaged, including a joint workshop with Eurostat. The aim is to bring together experts from national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies to share good practices.

6. Modernization of official statistics

67. Producers of official statistics are facing many challenges and operate in a continuously changing environment. New, timelier and more disaggregated statistical indicators have to be produced. At the same time, budgets are under pressure and new producers enter the arena with non-official statistics, which compete with official statistics. UNECE is working with countries to create models, standards, frameworks and guidelines to assist them in their modernization and collaboration efforts. The UNECE High-Level Group for the Modernization of Statistics (HLG-MOS) was set up to oversee and guide this work. It consists of a group of committed Chief Statisticians who actively steer the modernization of statistical organizations. The mission is to work together to identify trends, threats, and opportunities in modernizing statistical organizations. HLG-MOS provides a common platform for experts to develop solutions in a flexible and agile way. It is an umbrella that integrates various expert groups, projects, workshops and other activities. Due to the dynamic nature of these activities, the work programme is always determined in November-December of the preceding year.

68. UNECE provides the secretariat for this work, which aims to develop new models and standards, build capabilities and share statistical tools to innovate for statistical production. The work is carried out by four Modernization Groups (Supporting Standards, Sharing Tools, Capability and Communication, and Blue Skies Thinking Network), through annual projects and several modernization and sprint workshops throughout the year. HLG-MOS also

oversees workshops organized by UNECE with an innovative focus on dissemination and communication, data collection, statistical data editing and statistical confidentiality. Due to the dynamic nature of this work, there is a very short timeline between planning and conducting activities. The main activities of the four Modernization Groups, as well as the topics of HLG-MOS projects for 2020, will be identified in an annual HLG-MOS workshop by the end of 2019.

69. To work together within and between offices, it is a must to use the same models and standards. UNECE facilitates activities that allow statistical offices to have the same reference framework and to speak the same language. The Supporting Standards Modernization Group supports the use of models and standards developed under HLG-MOS to facilitate modernization activities such as the *Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations* (GAMSO), the *Generic Statistical Business Process Model* (GSBPM), and the *Generic Statistical Information Model* (GSIM). In 2019 this group finalized a review of GSIM, aligned the overarching processes in GSBPM with GAMSO, further specified the linkages between GSBPM and GSIM, defined the core ontology for official statistics, and expanded the glossary for metadata for statistics. In 2020, the group will continue to consolidate materials and practical examples to better communicate the models and to provide an integrated view of the various models. The annual UNECE ModernStats World Workshop will present and advance the work and discuss future work.

70. Reusing statistical tools developed by colleagues, or developing such tools jointly, increases efficiency. To make this possible it is necessary to agree upon the requirements that facilitate sharing and joint work. The Sharing Tools Modernization Group supports and encourages practical implementation of the *Common Statistical Production Architecture* (CSPA). This is the blueprint for statistical organizations which makes sharing easy. In 2020, the group will continue helping organizations to share services in a pragmatic way. New services will continuously be added to the *CSPA Service Catalogue*.

71. Without developing complementary skills and creating a modern flexible and agile workforce, statistical organizations are not able to increase and improve the production of statistics. The UNECE Modernization Group on Capability and Communication supports statistical organizations by providing guidelines on competency profiles, training, management issues, and other aspects needed to increase their efficiency (for example lean management). In 2019, the group developed a skills and capability framework and organized a Culture Evolution workshop. The group further worked on setting up a forum to better communicate the output produced by this group in recent years. In 2020, the group will continue to focus on emerging issues in human resource management in statistical offices and will organize a workshop to share innovative practices in Human Resource Management and Training for Statistical Organizations.

72. The field of official statistics must ensure that it remains adaptive to the changing environment and shifting landscape of challenges and opportunities. The UNECE Blue Skies Thinking Network is the innovation hub of the modernization work programme. It assesses emerging opportunities in the modernization of statistics. The outcome can be a proposal for further activities in this area, or a recommendation that the work should not proceed (or not yet). In 2019, a core group of twelve high-level experts was formed to discuss and assess various promising new and emerging areas of work in modernisation of official statistics. Topics such as synthetic data sets, secure multi-party computation, data science labs, chatbots, integrated platforms to support IT production as well as several modern IT technologies are under consideration. In 2020, the network will continue to consider new and emerging topics. The network also develops and evaluates project proposals for the modernization work programme for the following year.

73. Every year UNECE supports two modernization projects. HLG-MOS selects these topics at the start of each year to ensure that they address the most urgent matters facing statistical offices. For example, in 2019 many countries worked jointly in the Machine Learning project on pilot studies in the areas of classification and coding, editing and imputation, and imagery processing. Quality aspects of processing traditional as well as non-traditional data sources were defined, including issues such as the business process, costs and the time required to perform a process. The Strategic Communication Framework phase II project expanded the *Strategic Communication Framework* which was developed in 2018

and endorsed by CES in 2019. Guidelines to develop organizational vision and strategic staff engagement strategies were added, as well as tools for developing stakeholder engagement strategies and communication aspects of statistical organizations' engagement in government-wide data strategies.

74. Several aspects of statistics are not domain specific. UNECE is one of the few organizations that delivers workshops in important cross-cutting areas of statistical production, bringing together experts from various domains to share new developments and providing a platform for joint work and exchange of practices. For 2020, UNECE has planned workshops on Statistical Data Collection, Statistical Data Editing and Dissemination and Communication of Statistics, and will start the preparations for the 2021 Work Session on Statistical Data Confidentiality. All these workshops have a focus on new developments and identifying new directions and future work for the statistical community.

C. Capacity development

75. UNECE aims to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems in all member countries, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to implement international standards and guidelines and to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The capacity development is directly related to SDG 17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development", in particular targets 17.18 and 17.19.

76. Special attention is paid to promoting the *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, which provide the basis for a sound legal and institutional framework for national statistical systems. In June 2018 CES endorsed a new *UNECE Statistical Capacity Development Strategy*⁹, which reinforces the principle that capacity development activities should be user driven.

77. UNECE capacity development activities include:

- Global Assessments of national statistical systems
- Capacity development workshops
- Advisory services to address country-specific needs
- Development of methodological guidance, survey tools and training material.

78. Capacity development activities are carried out in partnership with other international organizations, in particular with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNSD, Eurostat, EFTA, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

79. UNECE capacity development activities are based on the findings and recommendations of Global Assessments of national statistical systems of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Global Assessments are carried out in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA and are used by various donors active in the region, such as the World Bank. The reports provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. They help national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to focus their technical cooperation activities on the identified needs. Global Assessments have resulted in action plans to improve national statistics in all countries where they have been conducted. In 2020, UNECE, with the partner organizations Eurostat and EFTA, expects to complete a Global Assessment of Belarus. A Global Assessment of Kyrgyzstan will be started.

⁹ See:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2018/CES_10_rev1__Statistical_capacity_development_strategy_rev.pdf

80. A United Nations Development Account Programme on Statistics and Data will complete its activities in 2020, to support the production of indicators to measure progress towards SDGs. UNECE is involved in the project in six statistical areas: means of implementation (institutional environment), environment, population, gender, poverty, and economic statistics. A range of workshops and other capacity development activities will be carried out under the Programme.

81. The Steering Committee of the Multi-Donor Programmatic Trust Fund to Support Statistical Capacity Building in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries (ECASTAT) will continue to finance a UNECE-led capacity development programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and to support statistics in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The programme, which runs from 2017 to 2020, consists of regional workshops and other training activities in the areas of national accounts, statistical business registers, prices, migration and remittance statistics. The Programme also supports the participation of experts from the target countries in statistical expert group meetings.

82. A new capacity development project funded by the Russian Federation will run from 2019 to 2021 to support the CIS countries to provide high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, with a special emphasis on environment statistics.

D. UNECE statistical database

83. UNECE operates a statistical database offering key statistics on member countries via free online interfaces in English and Russian. This work promotes open access to, and use of, data for evidence-based decision making, as requested in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

84. Emphasis is placed on providing data on areas of high political importance to governments and to the United Nations system, such as issues relating to migration, globalization, gender equality, population, education, employment, work-life balance, road traffic accidents, inland transport, and forest resources. The compilation of data on these topics gives insights into measurement issues and helps to identify priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and to provide targeted support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

85. In 2020, a major expansion of the database will be launched for SDG indicators, including an enhanced user interface in the form of a dashboard of SDG indicators for the UNECE countries, based on global SDG indicators. The dashboard will quickly and easily provide information on the UNECE countries' progress in achieving the SDGs to a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats. The data will be stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata.

86. To reduce the response burden on countries, data are collected from, or in cooperation with, other international organizations when possible. UNECE has continued its work to streamline the database activities, which has increased efficiency of data collection and facilitated timelier update and release of statistical data series. Further improvements are expected in the work related to the database maintenance, such as automated generation of gender questionnaires and easier maintenance of the macroeconomic database.

87. The database provides the source data for publications such as *UNECE Countries in Figures*, as well as for preparing regular short articles on economic and social development in the UNECE region, published in the UNECE Weekly newsletter and on the UNECE website. Annual user surveys are conducted to ensure relevance and to identify new user needs. Improvements to the efficiency of data processing tools will continue in 2020.

88. The UNECE statistical database is also used to disseminate data for UNECE policy work. In this respect, the database is a strategic resource for the whole UNECE and beyond.

Annex

List of meetings from January to December 2020

(Note: status of 23 March 2020. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting dates from April 2020 onward may be subject to change.)

<i>Jointly with</i>	<i>Meeting (venue)</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Capacity development</i>
OECD	Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on SEEA Implementation (Geneva, Switzerland)	13-14 February	
	CES Bureau Meeting (Aguascalientes, Mexico)	25-26 February	
	Task Force on Measuring the Quality of Administrative Sources for Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	5-6 March	
Eurostat, UN-GGIM: Europe	Joint Eurostat/UNECE/UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop on Integrating Statistical and Geospatial Data (virtual)	26-27 March	
	Modernization sprint on machine learning (virtual)	1-3 April	
	Expert Meeting on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (virtual)	21-22 April – <i>replaced by a series of webinars, dates tbd</i>	
	Workshop on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (virtual)	23-24 April – <i>replaced by a series of webinars, dates tbd</i>	X
EFTA, Eurostat, UNSD	Joint UNSD/UNECE/Eurostat/EFTA Thematic Conference “Managing a statistical organisation in times of change” (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)	postponed, new dates tbd	X
	Group of Expert on National Accounts (Geneva, Switzerland)	postponed, new dates tbd	
	Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices (Geneva, Switzerland)	2-4 June	
EFTA	Joint EFTA/UNECE Training Workshop on Climate Change-related Statistics for EECCA countries (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)	3-5 June	X
	68 th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, Switzerland)	22-24 a.m. June	
	Plenary session UN-GGIM Europe (Geneva, Switzerland)	22 June	
	Joint OECD-CSSP (Geneva, Switzerland)	24 (pm)-25 June	
	ModernStats World Workshop (Belgrade, Serbia)	24-26 June	
	Workshop on Statistical Data Editing (Geneva, Switzerland)	31 August – 2 September	
	Workshop on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication (Lisbon, Portugal)	7-9 September	
	Workshop on Human Resources Management and Training (Lisbon, Portugal)	9-11 September	
	Workshop on Harmonization of Poverty Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	7 September	X
	Expert Meeting on Measuring Poverty and Inequality (Geneva, Switzerland)	8-9 September	
Expert Forum for Users and Producers of Climate change-related statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	28-29 September		
Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses (Minsk, Belarus)	28-29 September	X	

	Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (Minsk, Belarus)	30 September – 2 October	
	Workshop on Statistical Data Collection (Geneva, Switzerland)	5-6 October	
	Workshop on Gender Statistics (Bern, Switzerland)	13 October	X
	Work Session on Gender Statistics (Bern, Switzerland)	14 October	
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	15-16 October	
Environment Division	Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (Geneva, Switzerland)	26-27 October	
	Workshop on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	27-28 (am) October	X
	UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	28 (pm)-30 October	
	Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation (Geneva, Switzerland)	4-5 November	
	Workshop on Modernization of Official Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-20 November	
