

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For information

Third meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau
Geneva, 12-13 February 2008

Item 10e of the Provisional
Agenda

**TASK FORCE ON EMERGING ISSUES IN SOCIAL STATISTICS
PROGRESS REPORT**

Note prepared by Statistics Canada

BACKGROUND

1. In October 2006, the Bureau agreed to establish a Task Force on Emerging Issues in Social Statistics with the main objective of developing concrete proposals to examine emerging issues in social statistics, including measurement concepts and common questions/modules. At the same meeting the Bureau approved the establishment of two task forces working under the supervision of the TF on emerging issues in social statistics. These two task forces relate to the measurement of volunteer work and emerging forms of families and households.

PROGRESS MADE

2. After the establishment of the TF on emerging issues in social statistics, members exchanged e-mails, had conference calls and met in Ottawa in September 2006 and in Lisbon in August 2007. The Task Force continued to focus the work in two areas: measurement of new forms of families and households and measurement of volunteering work.

New forms of families and households

3. The Task Force on Families and Households finalized the terms of reference as agreed by the Bureau in October 2006. The TF started its work through e-mails and conference calls and decided to focus on the following emerging forms of families and households:

- i) reconstituted families;
- ii) commuters between households;
- iii) persons living apart but within a network;
- iv) living apart together;
- v) same-sex couples.

Considering these five forms of families and households, the TF undertook a review of practices used by its members in relation to: criteria used to define households, definitions used for the identified emerging forms of families and households, and information collected in order to identify the emerging forms of families and households. Based on this review, the TF is in the process of finalising a paper providing for each of the five emerging forms of families and households a definition, a draft set of questions/information needed to produce relevant data, and explanatory notes on the collection and classification of data. It is expected that the paper and the draft questions be finalized by mid-February 2008. Members of the TF

have already started the discussion on how to proceed with the testing of the draft proposed questions.

Volunteer work

4. The Task Force on Measuring Volunteer Work made considerable progress toward the development of comparable measurements. It held a meeting in partnership with the Johns Hopkins University and ILO in July 2007 in Geneva which brought together members of the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Volunteer Work and experts on volunteering from around the world. The main objective was to discuss the practical concerns related to the measurement of volunteer work. This included conceptualization and definition of volunteering, target measures of volunteering, survey platforms, instrument design and accuracy of measurement. The meeting helped to clarify some of the conceptual and methodological issues involved in measuring volunteer work and identified a number of recommendations on defining volunteer activities, measuring volunteering and questionnaire design. These recommendations were developed considering the experience of many countries who have been conducting volunteer surveys.

5. In October 2007, the Bureau raised concern about a potential overlap between the activities of the Task Force and those of the Johns Hopkins/ILO. As a clarification - the Task Force and Johns Hopkins University are fully cooperating and the Johns Hopkins is a member of the Task Force. The joint meeting mentioned above is a good example of the collaboration.

6. Both groups have a shared goal of developing standards for defining and measuring volunteer activity. Johns Hopkins has a further objective to expand current national accounting rules to include the value of volunteer work. Johns Hopkins is also looking for countries to test different measurement approaches and to get feedback about placing volunteer questions in Labour Force Surveys. However, each country has its own issues and suggestions. The UNECE Task Force aims to find a common measurement platform for volunteering work. It also provides the statistical agencies' perspective of ensuring data quality, minimizing respondent burden, making use of ongoing survey platforms, etc.

PLAN FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES

7. The Task Force on Emerging Issues in Social Statistics plans to organize a session at the next IAOS meeting to present the preliminary results of the two task forces on families and households and volunteer work. The IAOS meeting would give the opportunity to provide feedback to the draft outputs produced by the two task forces before the final recommendations are finalized and presented to the Bureau.

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