

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of the 2013/2014 Bureau
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Approved

Item 2 (e) of the Provisional
Agenda

**SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW
BY THE CES BUREAU IN 2014-2015**

Note by the Secretariat

The note presents the proposal for statistical areas to be reviewed in-depth by the Bureau. The Bureau is welcome to suggest additional topics to the list. The Bureau selected four topics to be reviewed in-depth in 2014-2015 based on this document, and nominated countries or international organizations to prepare an issue paper for each review. Furthermore, the Bureau selected one topic for discussion at the CES 2014 plenary session to get input from all countries to the in-depth review.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly undertakes in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas. These reviews enable the Bureau to coordinate international statistical activities in the region, avoid duplication of work and address emerging issues. The aim of the discussion is to identify issues and challenges that member countries face, and propose possible follow-up actions at the international level to address them.
2. The selected topics should respond to the following criteria:
 - a) There are significant developments in the area;
 - b) There are significant coordination issues;
 - c) There is a lack of activities at the international level.
3. The Bureau also nominates a country/organization to prepare an issue paper, which serves as a basis for the discussion. The Bureau members and other agencies actively involved in the area are invited to contribute with short notes to the discussion.
4. The guidelines on the in-depth review process are provided in document ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/5/Rev.¹ and an updated template for the papers providing basis for the discussion in document ECE/CES/BUR/2014/JAN/7 for the current meeting.
5. Furthermore, the Bureau has decided that it would be useful to discuss one topic selected for an in-depth review at a CES plenary session prior to the discussion at the Bureau

¹ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2012/05Rev-Organization_of_in-depth_reviews.pdf

meetings. In this way, input can be obtained from the CES members. The approach has been successfully used during the last few years (with the topics of statistical dissemination and communication; time-use surveys; education statistics, population ageing and poverty statistics).

6. In order to facilitate the discussion, the Secretariat has prepared a list of potential topics that could be reviewed in 2014-2015, provided in Annex 1. The topics are divided into two groups: subject-matter issues and issues related to the organisation and management of statistical production.

7. The Bureau may select in-depth review topics from the annexed list, or propose any other topic. The topics are linked to the 56 statistical areas listed in the DISA² classification of statistical activities (see Annex 2), but the reviews are not limited to those topics. Annex 3 provides the list of topics that have been reviewed in-depth since 2008.

8. The Bureau may also decide to revisit the topics that have been reviewed in-depth earlier where actions were put on hold, such as Population projections (reviewed in 2007), Housing statistics (reviewed in 2009), and Education statistics (reviewed in 2012).

² Database of International Statistical Activities, available at : www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/DISA

ANNEX 1

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

I. LIST OF POSSIBLE TOPICS

Subject-matter issues

- A. Diversification of population census methodology and sources
- B. Energy statistics related to environment
- C. Measuring the global dimension and transboundary impacts related to sustainable development
- D. Labour movements and globalisation
- E. Measuring resilience, vulnerability and risks with official statistics
- F. Measuring extreme events and disasters
- G. New challenges in agricultural statistics

Issues related to management and organisation of statistical production

- H. Process-oriented approach to statistical production
- I. Seeking efficiencies in statistical production
- J. Strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry
- K. Data revolution – integrating statistics into decision making by means of new technology

II. EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE TOPICS

SUBJECT-MATTER ISSUES

A. Diversification of population census methodology and sources (DISA 1.1 Population and migration)

9. The 2010 round of population censuses is close to the end, and the information available shows that there were significant changes compared to the previous rounds, particularly with regard to census methodology. In the UNECE region, there was a substantial increase in the use of alternative census methods, based in most cases on the use of registers and on multiple response channels. Internet data collection was adopted in a significant number of countries, and in some cases it was the main data collection method.

10. Reviews of the 2010 round of censuses have started at the national and international level. In June 2012, the CES adopted a work plan for preparing the 2020 census recommendations by 2015. Nine task forces were set up to work on different aspects of census methodology, organization, management and information content taking into account the results of a 2013 survey evaluating national practices in the 2010 census. The CES recommendations for the 2020 round will be available in draft form by mid-2014.

11. While there is significant international cooperation with respect to population censuses, an independent high-level review of the various changes and the implications for the new recommendations for the 2020 census round and beyond the 2020 round is worthwhile. The UNECE survey shows that the current trend on increasing use of registers and multiple response channels (namely the internet response) is likely to continue in the 2020 round. With

regard to the new recommendations, a challenge is represented by the need to take into account the diversification of the census methods used, and to ensure as far as possible the international comparability of the census results considering that countries will use very different methods and data sources.

12. Based on the work plan for the preparations of the recommendations for the 2020 census round, the suitable timing for the in-depth review could be October 2014. By that time, the draft of 2020 CES recommendations will be available. The review could provide useful inputs for the finalization of the recommendations.

B. Energy statistics related to environment (DISA 2.4.2 Energy)

13. Statistics on the supply, trade, stocks, transformation and demand of energy have been traditionally collected for energy policy purposes. Recently, the need to analyse energy statistics from the environmental view point has increased. For instance, the EU's framework for energy and climate policies up to 2020 focuses on three headline targets for 20% reduction in GHG emissions, 20% of energy coming from renewable energy sources and 20% increase in energy efficiency.

14. The discussions on climate change have undoubtedly stimulated the development of renewable energy sources in order to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. Therefore, there is a strong need to strengthen the reporting of timely and reliable energy statistics with information on renewables and to develop new environmentally related energy indicators.

15. Housing is responsible for a substantial share of total energy demand. Measuring energy efficiency in housing (heating/cooling, appliances, by type of energy) is, therefore, an important component of environmental-related energy statistics. Estimating economic benefits from "green" buildings – e.g. savings on running costs for residents and increased energy affordability, benefits from less loss in the delivery of energy services, longer cycles of property repair, etc. is a new area that needs sound statistics.

16. The international work on energy statistics is led by the International Energy Agency (IEA) with the involvement of some other organizations, such as UNSD and Eurostat. An overview of the international work on energy statistics and its relation to other statistical areas (environment, housing, economy, climate change, etc.) would be useful to assess the situation and identify possible actions to improve international work in this area.

C. Measuring the global dimension and transboundary impacts related to sustainable development (DISA 3.3.6 Sustainable development; 3.3.4. Globalisation)

17. In June 2013, the Conference of European Statisticians had a seminar on measuring sustainable development, and endorsed the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*. One of the areas where the Conference suggested to undertake future work is on measuring the transboundary impacts of sustainable development. The analysis in the Recommendations showed that the "elsewhere" dimension in the framework has much lower availability of indicators compared to the other dimensions, "here and now" and "later". At the same time, work is undertaken by many countries and organizations on different aspects related to the transboundary impacts.

18. Furthermore, several global resources are important from sustainability viewpoint, such

as climate, air, oceans, etc. Some of these topics are considered in relation to the post-2015 development agenda which may lead to establishing related goals, targets and indicators. In the context of social capital, the importance of international institutions, multinational treaties, environmental conventions, etc. has been pointed out. For example, Switzerland has an indicator on multinational treaties in its SDI set.

19. An in-depth review of measuring the global dimension and transboundary impacts related to sustainable development would be very useful to take stock of what is available. It would also provide input and allow focusing better any further work on this topic. The in-depth review paper could make an overview of what the international organizations and selected countries do to:

- a) Measure the different aspects of transboundary impacts, such as labour migration (brain drain/gain), knowledge transfers, international financial flows, footprint indicators, etc. In some areas, a lot of data may be available (e.g. international trade) but it is not clear which of these are relevant for sustainable development; in other areas the relevant data need to be identified.
- b) Measure the global resources from sustainable development viewpoint, such as climate, oceans, air, international organizations, international treaties and conventions, etc.

D. Labour movements and globalisation (DISA 1.2 Labour)

20. Increasing international labour movements pose challenges both to measurement and to analysis of national accounts and other statistics and measurement of labour productivity. The consequences of international labour movements are especially important for countries which host many foreign workers or have large numbers of nationals working abroad.

21. When launching work on the impact of globalisation on national accounts was discussed in October 2006, the Bureau decided to focus on the economic aspects of globalisation at first stage, but underlined the need to keep social issues related to globalisation on the agenda.

22. Therefore, the CES work on globalisation and global production mainly concentrated on the impact of globalisation on economic statistics. *The Guide on the Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts* also discussed international labour movements (Chapters 10), remittances (Chapters 11) and second homes abroad (Chapter 12).

23. As identified in the Guide, recording of international labour movements in labour force statistics, and links between labour statistics and national accounts are areas that require further work. For instance, household surveys should be used more intensively as a source of information on labour movements and developing analytical tables on international labour movements would be needed for analysis of the impact of non-resident labour on productivity, wages, household expenditure, GDP and national income.

24. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) Evaluating the impact of globalisation through the movement of persons in various statistics, such as labour statistics and statistics on trade in services;
- b) Taking stock of recent developments in labour statistics linked to international labour movement and other impacts of globalisation;

- c) How to move forward in improving the measurement of international labour movement in the context of globalisation?

E. Measuring resilience, vulnerability and risks with official statistics (DISA ?)

25. The terms – resilience, vulnerability and risks – appear in different discussions on sustainability, climate change, poverty, food crisis, financial risks, etc. This area cuts across economic, environmental and social statistics. For example, measuring resilience is discussed in the context of poverty, food insecurity, health, youth, ageing, climate change, etc. Measuring risks is often discussed in connection with financial statistics but also related to poverty, health, etc. Although this is a new area for official statistics, some statistical offices are already undertaking work, for example Italy has done some work on measuring risks.

26. Measuring risks could deal with either the causes or drivers of future events (extreme whether events), or the impacts of actualised risks on current circumstances. For instance, OECD plans to pursue work on ‘economic insecurity’ which is one the many areas of measuring risks.

27. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) There are no common statistical definitions: e.g. what is understood and what should be measured under resilience, vulnerability, risk?
- b) There is policy demand for such measures, e.g. on resilience. What should be the response of statistical offices? What existing statistics can provide information on risks, resilience, etc.?
- c) Which international organizations do related work and what data are they using?
- d) Which statistical areas provide data that can be used for analysing resilience, vulnerabilities and risks?

F. Measuring extreme events and disasters

28. Whenever a disaster strikes, statistical offices are one of the sources asked to provide quickly data on the population, areas and businesses affected. The disasters can be natural or man-made, ranging from earthquakes, floods and tsunamis to extreme temperatures, forest fires and industrial accidents. Different statistical offices and international organizations are tackling these issues but there is no coordinated effort and no common conceptual basis. UNDP has a historical database on natural disasters, UNFPA, OCHA, ESCAP work in the area. Although the most engaged are the statistical offices of the South-east Asian region, the topic is relevant also to countries of the UNECE region.

29. Disaster risk reduction (combined with climate change) is one of the areas of focus of the UN Open Working Group discussing the post-2015 development agenda. A world conference on extreme events and disasters is planned to be held in 2015. We can expect that these developments will put the topic high on the policy agenda and the need for relevant data will become even more actual.

30. An in-depth review of this area could consider two viewpoints: measuring the environmental, economic or social impact of disasters; or providing data to be prepared for disasters (e.g. population, land, businesses potentially affected). The topic has links to environment statistics, climate change related statistics, sustainable development, etc., and

often requires access to geo-referenced microdata. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) There are no common classifications, e.g., countries identify very different types of disasters, some covering only natural disasters, others or also man-made disasters. The measurements are often tailored to serve specific policies;
- b) Data often focus on inputs (how much did it cost to build something that has been destroyed). It is more difficult to measure the outcomes of investments in improving resilience to the damage caused by disasters;
- c) Data availability and accessibility: data are compiled from various sources, including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, insurance companies, research institutes and press agencies. Sometimes new data sets are collected that duplicate the data that are available from statistical systems; sometimes this is due to timeliness issues;
- d) Are there innovative approaches or good practices in using official statistics for building resilience to disasters? For example UNFPA has developed the Demographic Explorer for Climate Adaptation (DECA) for Indonesia to incorporate various official statistics and other data, particularly census data and social statistics, into spatial analytics for climate change adaptation. Could this type of tools be developed more widely?

G. New challenges in agricultural statistics (DISA 2.4.1 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries)

31. Several developments, such as food crisis, the impact of climate change etc. have drawn attention to agricultural statistics. These developments have economic, environmental and social impacts on the society, especially on the communities depending on farming. The inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) put new pressures for the development of agricultural statistics. FAO, UNSD, OECD, ILO and other international players have made initiatives to re-align agricultural statistics to new user requirements and other statistics.

32. The Bureau made an in-depth review of agricultural statistics in October 2008. There were several concerns raised at the time. Since then, important discussions have taken place at the global level to develop a global strategy for agricultural statistics, Eurostat started new work on agricultural statistics and the FAO Statistical Division was strengthened. It might be timely to revisit this area and see whether the issues identified six years ago have been addressed.

33. Users need to be able to analyse developments related to land use, rural development, greenhouse gas emissions, environmental sustainability, climate change etc. New demands for agricultural statistics also include analysis of its environmental impact, ownership of rural areas, water and energy use, non-food use of agricultural products and better access to small area statistics. One of the problems with agricultural statistics has also been the concentration on the supply side and the producer, whereas less attention has been paid on the demand side.

34. A priority for the UNECE countries is improving quality and cost-efficiency of agricultural statistics, integrating these statistics with other statistics and improving coordination among the producers of agricultural statistics (e.g. with other government agencies dealing with agricultural statistics). The in-depth review could analyse priorities in

the development of agricultural statistics and key links between agricultural and other statistics in order to identify any gaps, need for coordination or further work.

ISSUES RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION

H. Process-oriented approach to statistical production (DISA 5.5 Management and development of technological resources, but not limited to that)

35. Many statistical organisations have moved to, or are considering implementing a more process-oriented approach to statistical production, as part of moving to streamline or “industrialise” official statistics. These initiatives are closely linked to the vision of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services (HLG), endorsed by the CES in June 2011.

36. Whilst statistical production has traditionally been organised in domain-specific “stovepipes”, some organisations have moved towards a more functional approach, grouping together core functions such as data collection, processing and dissemination, across statistical domains. This approach may lead to increases in efficiency, but may also have certain drawbacks in terms of lack of overview of individual staff members of the production process and its purpose.

37. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:
- a) What type of organizational structure best supports statistics production taking into account increasing demands and financial constraints?
 - b) Identifying experiences with implementing different organizational structures, one of which is the process-oriented approach;
 - c) Exploring good practices and common lessons learned regarding process-oriented approaches to statistical production.

I. Seeking efficiencies in statistical production (DISA 5.3 Quality frameworks and measurement of performance of statistical systems and offices , but not limited to that)

38. It seems unlikely that statistical offices could continue to absorb all of the new data demands given that the resources available to maintain the existing statistical programmes have been reduced in many countries, and may continue to reduce in the coming years. The increasing user needs call for efficient use of resources at statistical offices to increase the value for money offered by official statistics. According to the strategy of HLG “statistical organisations should create environments that facilitate the reuse and sharing of methods, components, processes and data repositories that not only enable the delivery of predetermined outputs and services but which also enable new products and services to be created more efficiently”.

39. HLG notes that it will become increasingly important to accelerate work in improving efficiency of processes and to ensure wider acceptance and use of standards. A systematic approach to statistical production and services is central in progress towards more efficient and cost-effective statistical production. This can be best achieved internationally by sharing recent innovations of statistical offices in seeking efficiencies.

40. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) Reviewing international work aimed at increasing the efficiency of statistical production;
- b) Exploring innovative uses of statistical and non-statistical data sources to increase productivity and develop new statistical products and services;
- c) Identifying examples of ways to rationalise statistical production and re-organise existing survey processes to achieve greater efficiency.

41. The review could help HLG to more closely align its work with national projects aiming at better efficiency of statistical production.

J. Strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry (related to DISA 5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles; role and organization of official statistics, but not limited to that)

42. National statistical offices are increasingly building partnerships with other organisations in the information industry. For example commercial organisations' strengths in data collection, dissemination, technologies and visualisation can be used to support and promote official statistics. As more data becomes available in societies, it will become ever more important for statistical offices to fulfil their obligations in this regard.

43. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) Investigating how statistical offices could create environments to encourage third parties to add value to statistical products and services;
- b) Taking stock of the kind of partnerships formed by statistical offices, such as partnerships for using statistical data to develop services for mobile applications;
- c) Considering the links of wider use of statistical data to the issue of "Open Data and rights" – the right to information, the right to privacy etc;
- d) How statistical offices could both fulfill and protect these rights while using Open Data and providing more statistical data for new purposes.

K. Data revolution – integrating statistics into decision making by means of new technology (related to DISA 5.5 Management and development of technological resources, but not limited to that)

44. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda³ notes that "The revolution in information technology over the last decade provides an opportunity to strengthen data and statistics for accountability and decision-making purposes. There have been innovative initiatives to use mobile technology and other advances to enable real-time monitoring of development results. But this movement remains largely disconnected from the traditional statistics community at both global and national levels."

45. The report continues: "A true data revolution would draw on existing and new sources of data to fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access to, and use of, data and ensure increased support for statistical systems." The review would consider what could be done e.g. by HLG to improve the situation.

³ www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

46. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

- a) Considering what is meant by “data revolution” and how it relates to official statistics;
- b) Taking stock of international work and countries’ innovations related to data revolution;
- c) What kind of new products and services have been developed to integrate statistics better into decision making?
- d) What is the role of statistical offices in the data revolution and what should it be in the future?

ANNEX 2

CLASSIFICATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES (CSA REV. 1 - October 2009)

Domain 1: Demographic and social statistics

- 1.1 Population and migration
- 1.2 Labour
- 1.3 Education
- 1.4 Health
- 1.5 Income and consumption
- 1.6 Social protection
- 1.7 Human settlements and housing
- 1.8 Justice and crime
- 1.9 Culture
- 1.10 Political and other community activities
- 1.11 Time use

Domain 2: Economic statistics

- 2.1 Macroeconomic statistics
- 2.2 Economic accounts
- 2.3 Business statistics
- 2.4 Sectoral statistics
 - 2.4.1 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries
 - 2.4.2 Energy
 - 2.4.3 Mining, manufacturing, construction
 - 2.4.4 Transport
 - 2.4.5 Tourism
 - 2.4.6 Banking, insurance, financial statistics
- 2.5 Government finance, fiscal and public sector statistics
- 2.6 International trade and balance of payments
- 2.7 Prices
- 2.8 Labour cost
- 2.9 Science, technology and innovation

Domain 3: Environment and multi-domain statistics

3.1 Environment

3.2 Regional and small area statistics

3.3 Multi-domain statistics and indicators

3.3.1 Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues

3.3.2 Gender and special population groups

3.3.3 Information society

3.3.4 Globalisation

3.3.5 Indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals

3.3.6 Sustainable development

3.3.7 Entrepreneurship

3.4 Yearbooks and similar compendia

Domain 4: Methodology of data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis

4.1 Metadata

4.2 Classifications

4.3 Data sources

4.3.1 Population and housing censuses; registers of population, dwellings and buildings

4.3.2 Business and agricultural censuses and registers

4.3.3 Household surveys

4.3.4 Business and agricultural surveys

4.3.5 Other administrative sources

4.4 Data editing and data linkage

4.5 Dissemination, data warehousing

4.6 Statistical confidentiality and disclosure protection

4.7 Data analysis

Domain 5: Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics

5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles; role and organization of official statistics

5.2 Statistical programmes; coordination within statistical systems

5.3 Quality frameworks and measurement of performance of statistical systems and offices

5.4 Management and development of human resources

5.5 Management and development of technological resources (including standards for electronic data exchange and data sharing)

5.6 Coordination of international statistical work

5.7 Technical cooperation and capacity building

ANNEX 3

TOPICS REVIEWED IN-DEPTH SINCE 2008

- Culture statistics (Feb 2008, paper by Finland)
- Environment statistics (Feb 2008, paper by Eurostat)
- Agricultural statistics, including forestry and fisheries statistics (Oct 2008, paper by Eurostat, in cooperation with United States and Brazil)
- Measurement of labour cost (Oct 2008, paper by OECD)
- Housing statistics (Feb 2009, paper by Poland)
- Statistical dissemination, communication and publications (Oct 2009, paper by the CES Steering Group on Statistical Dissemination and Communication)
- Government finance, fiscal and public sector statistics (Oct 2009, paper by IMF)
- The use of secondary and mixed sources for official statistics (Jun 2010, paper by UNECE)
- Time-use surveys (Nov 2010, paper by Germany)
- Measuring the information society and statistics on science, technology and innovation (Nov 2010, paper by Australia)
- Education statistics (Nov 2011, paper by Australia)
- Global manufacturing (Nov 2011, paper by the Netherlands)
- Household survey methods (Nov 2011, paper by Canada)
- Banking, insurance and financial statistics (Nov 2012, paper by IMF)
- Poverty statistics (Nov 2012, paper by Ukraine and Eurostat)
- Statistics related to population ageing (Nov 2012, paper by UNECE)
- Political and other community activities, incl. volunteering (Feb 2013, paper by Mexico, notes by ILO and Eurostat)
- Entrepreneurship (Oct 2013, paper by OECD and Eurostat, note by UNECE)
- Big Data (Oct 2013, paper by UNECE with input from a Task Team on Big Data)
- Social protection (Jan 2014, paper by UNECE)
- Leading, composite and sentiment indicators (Jan 2014, paper by UNECE)

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