

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2013/2014 Bureau
Geneva, 28-29 January 2014

Item 3 (a) of the
Provisional Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR A TASK FORCE ON POVERTY MEASUREMENT**

Note by the Secretariat

*This document contains a proposal for establishing a Task Force on Poverty Measurement, reflecting the conclusions of the Seminar “The way forward in poverty measurement” held in Geneva in December 2013. **The Bureau discussed and approved the terms of reference for the Task Force.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. The monitoring of Millennium Development Goals and the recent discussions on the post-2015 development agenda have further highlighted the importance of measuring poverty. In light of the recent economic crisis, the need for reliable and timely statistics for international monitoring and national policymaking on poverty reduction has become even more apparent.

2. However, there is currently no coherent set of indicators to measure and monitor poverty in the UNECE region. For monitoring the Millennium Development Goal 1 “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”, over 100 indicators are used by the countries in the region. Indicators used by international organizations are not among those used most frequently by the countries. For the various indicators, a large variety of definitions, methods and primary data sources are available and there are no uniform national or international guidelines for their application. Reporting on bias and uncertainty of poverty data is limited.

3. In November 2012, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) conducted an in-depth review of poverty statistics based on a paper by Ukraine and Eurostat. The paper gave an overview of the methodological issues underlying poverty measurement and presented two case studies: one at international level (Eurostat) and the other at national level (Ukraine). As a follow-up to the in-depth review, the Bureau requested the secretariat to organize a seminar to discuss how to improve poverty measurement.

4. The Seminar “The way forward in poverty measurement” took place in Geneva on 2-4 December 2013. It brought together 62 participants from 29 countries and 6 international organizations. All countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were represented, as well as all major international agencies that are active in poverty measurement in the UNECE region (CISSTAT, Eurostat, OECD, UNDP, World Bank). Participation extended beyond the UNECE region, to countries such as Chile, Colombia and the United Arab Emirates. Researchers in the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative represented academia.

5. Participants discussed in-depth methodological issues in poverty measurement, data comparability, and interlinkages between poverty, inequality, vulnerability and social exclusion. The Seminar identified several areas where future international work is needed and recommended that a CES task force undertake this work. The present terms of reference reflect the conclusions of the Seminar.

II. MANDATE AND REPORTING

6. The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of the activities of the CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period of three years, at the end of which a final report will be submitted to the Bureau.

III. OBJECTIVE

7. The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidelines and provide recommendations for improving the international comparability and availability of statistics on poverty and the related metadata.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

8. To achieve its objective, the Task Force will undertake the following activities:

- a) Prepare an inventory of poverty indicators in international databases;
- b) Define a coherent set of indicators to measure absolute and relative poverty in countries participating in the Conference of European Statisticians, taking into account the need to measure poverty among women, children and older persons;
- c) Develop guidelines on the definitions, methods and data sources of the defined poverty indicators;
- d) Provide recommendations on the documentation of metadata on poverty.

9. The Task Force may also explore the possibility of developing guidelines for multidimensional measurement of poverty and outline the steps that would be required in this direction.

10. The Task Force will link its work to the global and regional efforts for monitoring poverty reduction in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

11. In pursuing these activities, the Task Force will take into account previous international initiatives and endeavours in poverty measurement. It will include experts from the international organizations that are active in poverty measurement.

V. TIMETABLE

12. The activities of the Task Force are planned for the period from February 2014 to January 2017, according to the following tentative timetable:

February-March 2014	Launching the Task Force – confirming the countries and organizations interested to participate in its work
---------------------	---

April-June 2014	Discussion of work plan, to identify the concrete activities and outputs of the Task Force which could be implemented within the three-year mandate
July-December 2014	Preparing an inventory of poverty indicators in international databases
November 2014 – April 2015	Defining a coherent set of indicators to measure absolute and relative poverty in countries participating in the Conference of European Statisticians
spring 2015	Face-to-face meeting in Geneva, back-to-back with a UNECE seminar on poverty measurement, to review progress and agree on further steps, including the way of developing the coherent indicator set
April-June 2015	Electronic consultation on the defined indicator set
July-September 2015	Revision of the indicator set based on the consultation
September 2015 – September 2016	Drafting recommendations on the documentation of metadata on poverty. Drafting guidelines on the definitions, methods and data sources of the defined poverty indicators
October-December 2016	Editing the report
January 2017	Submission of the report to the CES Bureau

VI. METHODS OF WORK

12. The Task Force will mainly work via email and telephone conferences. At least one face-to-face meeting will be organized, back-to-back with the poverty seminar that UNECE plans to hold in spring 2015.

13. For the preparation of the draft documents, the Task Force may take advantage of the wiki infrastructure available at UNECE.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

14. The following countries and international organizations have expressed their interest in participating in the Task Force: Chile, Colombia, Italy, Georgia, Germany, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey, United Kingdom, Eurostat, OECD, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (United Kingdom).

15. UNECE will provide the secretariat.

* * * * *