



Economic and Social Council

14 January 2014

English only

Approved

Economic Commission for Europe

Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians

Meeting of the 2013/2014 Bureau

Geneva, 28-29 January 2014

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Biennial Evaluation Report for the Statistics subprogramme (2012-2013)

Subprogramme 3: Statistics

Note by the Secretariat

The note provides the 2012-2013 biennial performance evaluation for the Economic Commission for Europe Programme of Work, Subprogramme 3. Statistics. It presents the performance evaluation in an aggregated way, harmonised with the United Nations biennial planning and evaluation framework. It complements the annual reports submitted the Bureau on the implementation of the Statistical Programmes for 2012 and 2013.

The CES Bureau approved the document.

I. Introduction

1. This biennial evaluation report is based on the biennial evaluation plan for 2012-2013. It presents an assessment of accomplishments and lessons learned for each cluster of work of the Subprogramme 3, Statistics.
2. The indicators of achievement for each expected accomplishment are reported for the end of each biennium unless otherwise indicated.

I. Cluster 1: Coordination of international statistical work in the Economic Commission for Europe region

A. Expected accomplishment

3. Streamlined activity patterns of statistical work through coordination among international organizations and elimination of overlaps and gaps.

B. Indicators of achievement

4. Number of international organizations regularly reporting their activities to the Database of International Statistical Activities maintained by ECE and regularly reviewed by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians.
 - (a) 2008-2009: 27 organizations;
 - (b) 2010-2011: 26 organizations;
 - (c) Target 2012-2013: 27 organizations (implemented 26).
5. Number of statistical areas reviewed in-depth by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians.
 - (a) 2008-2009: 6 areas;
 - (b) 2010-2011: 5 areas;
 - (c) Target 2012-2013: 5 areas (implemented 6).

C. Accomplishment account

6. ECE organized in-depth reviews of international statistical work in the following six areas to improve inter-agency coordination and eliminate overlaps and gaps in statistical activities in the ECE region: population ageing; banking, insurance and financial statistics; poverty statistics; political and other community activities; big data; and entrepreneurship. As a follow-up to these reviews, international work was launched to improve the availability of ageing-related statistics and to provide guidance on big data in official statistics. In 2012-2013, 26 international organizations provided information to the ECE Database on International Statistical Activities (DISA) for coordination of work. Full use of the DISA classification, developed by ECE, was made by the international consortium on Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange, and the United Nations Statistics Division in their global inventory of statistical standards.

7. ECE also contributed in substance to methodological materials on statistical work in general, such as the *Preamble of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* (published at the request of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2013).

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

8. An evaluation of the outcomes of in-depth reviews by the CES Bureau emphasized the value of the process for statistical work in the ECE region which leads to tangible results through identifying gaps and areas for coordination. The evaluation showed that the selection of topics was crucial for focusing on the right issues. This lesson learned will be taken into account in the preparation of the future in-depth reviews.

II. Cluster 2: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Database

A. Expected accomplishment

9. Improved availability in the ECE database of reliable, timely and comparable statistics, including gender disaggregated data for all countries in the ECE region.

B. Indicators of achievement

10. Increased number of statistical time series available in the ECE database.

(a) 2008-2009: not applicable;

(b) 2010-2011: 150 time series;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 155 time series (implemented 158).

11. Percentage of users that express, through user surveys, satisfaction with the quality, coverage and timeliness of data contained in the ECE database.

(a) 2008-2009: 84 per cent;

(b) 2010-2011: 80 per cent;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 80 per cent (implemented 84).

C. Accomplishment account

12. Progress was made in the availability of high quality macroeconomic, social and demographic statistics in the ECE statistical database. A new clearing house for harmonizing migration data of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States was launched as part of the UNECE Statistical Database. The timeliness, completeness, reliability and comparability of the statistical database were improved. A total of 158 statistical time series were available in the database with 7 new series in the migration clearing house. User satisfaction remained high, with two online surveys indicating 84 per cent of users qualifying data as excellent or good. In 2012-2013, data downloads increased by 41 per cent compared to 2010-2011. Automated data collection processes developed by ECE increased the timeliness and reliability of data. A new web interface improved functionalities and visualization of data.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

13. The migration clearing house has proven to be a useful tool for improving data comparability across countries. The same approach will be applied for the MDG database. Based on experience over a number of biennia, another lesson learned is that the user satisfaction has stabilized and reached the optimal rate. The goal for the upcoming biennia will be to maintain the current high level of user satisfaction.

III. Cluster 3: Methodological work in economic statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

14. Updated and newly developed standards, methodologies and practices for ensuring internationally comparable economic statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

15. Number of new or revised international statistical standards and recommendations in the field of economic statistics to which ECE has contributed in substance.

(a) 2008-2009: 2 standards or recommendations;

(b) 2010-2011: 2 standards or recommendations;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 1 standard or recommendation (implemented 0).

16. The number of statistical areas (according to the Database of International Statistical Activities classification) related to economic statistics in which UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

(a) 2008-2009: 6 statistical areas;

(b) 2010-2011: 6 statistical areas;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 6 statistical areas (implemented 6).

C. Accomplishment account

17. In 2012, ECE published a re-print of the recommendations *The Impact of Globalization on National Accounts*.

18. ECE also contributed in substance to methodological materials on the *Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices* (published by Eurostat in 2013), *Framework for Statistics on the Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth* (published by OECD in 2013) and *Guidelines for Micro Statistics on Household Wealth* (published by OECD in 2013).

19. Overall, ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 6 statistical areas related to economic statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

20. The lesson learned was that the number of statistical areas of work cannot be significantly increased by ECE without additional resources. Instead, ECE has to focus on

areas of specific importance for the member States and assist them in reducing national costs of statistical development work through international collaboration, such as in the on-going work on developing guidance on global production and business registers.

VI. Cluster 4: Methodological work in social and demographic statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

21. Updated and newly developed standards, methodologies and practices for ensuring internationally comparable social and demographic statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

22. Number of new or revised international statistical standards and recommendations in the field of social and demographic statistics to which ECE has contributed in substance.

- (a) 2008-2009: 2 standards or recommendations;
- (b) 2010-2011: 2 standards or recommendations;
- (c) Target 2012-2013: 3 standards or recommendations (implemented 4).

23. The number of statistical areas (according to the Database of International Statistical Activities classification) related to social and demographic statistics in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

- (a) 2008-2009: 9 statistical areas;
- (b) 2010-2011: 9 statistical areas;
- (c) Target 2012-2013: 8 statistical areas (implemented 8).

C. Accomplishment account

24. Over the 2012-2013 biennium, ECE has coordinated the drafting of and contributed in substance to the development of the statistical standards and recommendations in social and demographic statistics as follows:

- (a) *International classification of crimes for statistical purposes* (published by ECE in 2012);
- (b) *Analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions* (published by ECE in 2012);
- (c) *Guidelines for Harmonizing Time Use Surveys* (published by ECE in 2013);
- (d) *The stock-taking report on measuring human capital* (published by OECD in 2012).

25. In addition, as part of capacity building activities, ECE produced methodological materials on social and demographic statistics, such as:

- (a) *Practices of UNECE countries in the 2010 round of population and housing censuses* (published by ECE in 2013);
- (b) *Survey Module for Measuring Health State* (published by ECE in 2013).

26. ECE also contributed in substance to the drafting of methodological materials, such as the *Guidelines for Statistics on Violence against Women* (published by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in 2013) and a *Manual on Gender Statistics* (published by UNSD in 2013).

27. Overall, ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 8 statistical areas related to social and demographic statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

28. The lesson learned was that the number of statistical areas of work cannot be significantly increased by ECE without additional resources. Instead, ECE has to focus on areas of specific importance for the member States and assist them in reducing national costs of statistical development work through international collaboration, such as in the on-going work on measuring quality of employment, human capital and circular migration as well as developing ageing-related statistics.

VII. Cluster 5: Methodological work in environment and sustainable development statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

29. Updated and newly developed standards, methodologies and practices for ensuring internationally comparable statistics in the field of environment and sustainable development.

B. Indicators of achievement

30. Number of new or revised international statistical standards and recommendations on measuring environment and sustainable development to which ECE has contributed in substance.

- (a) 2008-2009: 1 standard or recommendation;
- (b) 2010-2011: 1 standard or recommendation;
- (c) Target 2012-2013: 1 standard or recommendation (implemented 1).

31. The number of statistical areas (according to the Database of International Statistical Activities classification) related to measuring environment and sustainable development in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

- (a) 2008-2009: 2 statistical areas;
- (b) 2010-2011: 2 statistical areas;
- (c) Target 2012-2013: 3 statistical areas (implemented 3).

C. Accomplishment account

32. Over the 2012-2013 biennium, an ECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on measuring sustainable development produced recommendations that were endorsed by the CES in June 2013:

(a) *CES Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development* (published by ECE in 2013).

33. Overall, ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 3 statistical areas: environment statistics, climate change related statistics and sustainable development.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

34. The lesson learned was that the number of statistical areas of work cannot be significantly increased by ECE without additional resources. Instead, ECE has to focus on areas of specific importance for the member States and assist them in reducing national costs of statistical development work through international collaboration, such in the work on climate change related statistics that will result in recommendations during the next biennium.

VIII. Cluster 6: Methodological work on cross-cutting issues of official statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

35. Updated and newly developed standards, methodologies and practices for ensuring internationally comparable statistics on cross-cutting issues of official statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

36. Number of new or revised international statistical standards and recommendations in cross-cutting issues of official statistics to which ECE has contributed in substance.

(a) 2008-2009: 1 standard or recommendation;

(b) 2010-2011: 1 standard or recommendation;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 1 standard or recommendation (implemented 1).

37. The number of statistical areas (according to the Database of International Statistical Activities classification) related to cross-cutting issues of official statistics in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

(a) 2008-2009: 11 statistical areas;

(b) 2010-2011: 10 statistical areas;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 10 statistical areas (implemented 10).

C. Accomplishment account

38. Over the 2012-2013 biennium, ECE coordinated the drafting of and contributed in substance to the development of the recommendations on cross-cutting issues of official statistics as follows:

(a) *Human resources management and training, compilation of good practices in statistical offices* (published by ECE in 2013).

39. In addition, as part of capacity building activities and expert group meetings, ECE produced methodological materials on crosscutting statistical issues, such as:

(a) *Multilingual applications for official statistics* (published by ECE in 2012);

(b) *Getting the Facts Right: A guide to presenting metadata with examples on Millennium Development Goal indicators* (published by ECE in 2013);

(c) *Making Data Meaningful Part 4: A guide to improving statistical literacy* (published by ECE in 2012).

40. ECE also published the biennial publication called *Countries in figures 2013, Europe, Central Asia, North America*. In addition, ECE contributed in substance to methodological materials, such as the *Guidelines for the Template for a Generic National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF)* (published at the request of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2012).

41. Overall, ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 10 statistical areas related to cross-cutting issues of official statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

42. The lesson learned was that the number of statistical areas of work cannot be significantly increased by ECE without additional resources. Instead, ECE has to focus on areas of specific importance for the member States and assist them in reducing national costs of statistical development work through international collaboration. The High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services has drafted a new governance structure to improve the coordination of international statistical work in cross-cutting issues of official statistics in support of modernisation activities.

IX. Cluster 7: Capacity building to ECE member countries

A. Expected accomplishment

43. Improved assistance in the implementation of international standards and good practices in official statistics, in particular in less advanced countries of the ECE region, including on gender-sensitive indicators.

B. Indicators of achievement

44. Number of statistical areas for which technical assistance and advisory services were provided.

(a) 2008-2009: not applicable;

(b) 2010-2011: 10 areas;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 11 areas (implemented 12).

45. Increased percentage of national experts that express, through evaluation questionnaires, satisfaction with the relevance and quality of the ECE advisory services, training courses, and workshops.

(a) 2008-2009: not applicable;

(b) 2010-2011: 75 per cent;

(c) Target 2012-2013: 80 per cent (implemented 89).

C. Accomplishment account

46. ECE carried out 13 training workshops and a number of advisory missions to address capacity gaps in the countries with developing statistical systems. These activities covered 12 statistical areas in which member States requested ECE's assistance to achieve better compliance with international standards and good practices. In total, 89 per cent of experts who took part in ECE training workshops considered the training to be of high quality and useful for their work. The progress in implementing international standards and ensuring compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics was analysed through Global Assessments of national statistical systems carried out by ECE in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the EU and the European Free Trade Association in Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Mongolia. The Global Assessments, provided country-specific recommendations for the development of national statistical capacity, and were used, for example by the World Bank for planning capacity building activities and to mobilise resources from donor organisations.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

47. The number of statistical areas for which advisory services were provided is only a proxy of the outcome of ECE work. The lesson learned was that the number of member States implementing recommendations of Global Assessments is a better measure of progress, which will replace the current indicator in 2014-2015. To improve implementation of the recommendations of its Global Assessments, ECE will monitor the inclusion of those recommendations in the national statistical plans and strategies.
