

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

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Item II (b) of the Provisional
Agenda

**SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS
IN 2017-2018**

Note by the Secretariat

The Bureau selected topics to be reviewed in-depth in 2017-2018 and nominated countries or international organizations to prepare a paper for each review.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly undertakes in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas to coordinate statistical activities in the region and address emerging issues. The aim is to identify issues and challenges and propose possible follow-up actions to address them.
2. Guidelines for in-depth reviews are provided in ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/5/Rev.¹ and a template for papers in ECE/CES/BUR/2014/JAN/7.
3. To facilitate the discussion, the Secretariat has prepared a list of potential topics that could be reviewed. The topics are divided into two groups: subject-matter issues and issues related to the organization and management of statistical production
4. The Bureau may select in-depth review topics from the annexed list, or propose any other topic. The topics are often linked to the statistical areas listed in the Classification of Statistical Activities (www.unece.org/disa), but not limited to those topics.
5. Annex 1 provides a list of topics that have been reviewed since 2012. Annex 2 provides the Classification of Statistical Activities.

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

II. LIST OF POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

Subject-matter issues

- A. Measuring social exclusion
- B. Gaps in gender statistics

Issues related to management and organization of statistical production

- C. Definition of national statistical systems
- D. Integrating statistics into decision making
- E. Capacity building for monitoring SDGs
- F. Statistical communication related to SDGs

III. EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE TOPICS

SUBJECT-MATTER ISSUES

A. Measuring social exclusion

15. The tight economic situation of many European countries is leading to increasing social exclusion – a division between insiders and outsiders – and policy makers need better tools to effectively address the serious problems arising from this divide. Policy discourse is extending beyond poverty and deprivation to address the processes by which people and groups experience exclusion. The concept of social exclusion is not only linked to poverty and deprivation, but also to accumulation of disadvantage with respect to material resources, social and economic participation and personal growth.

16. As a multi-dimensional concept, social exclusion (or inclusion) cannot easily be measured through existing statistics which have not been designed for this purpose. Therefore, countries have developed various indicators to analyze the different aspects of social exclusion. Eurostat provides indicators to monitor the EU goal to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 20 million by 2020 compared with 2008. According to these indicators, almost every fourth person in the EU was still at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2013.

17. Income remains the most widely used indicator to measure social exclusion although it does not measure the exclusion directly. There appears to be relatively few measures of access to institutions and better data are needed to measure functional literacy, numeracy and human rights issues which have a direct relationship with social exclusion. More data are needed to examine the determinants of exclusion, powerlessness and voicelessness, economic vulnerability and diminished life experiences and limited life prospects. Often the available statistics are not adequately differentiated across population groups and their characteristics.

18. The aim of this in-depth review would be to take stock of:

- a) Existing concepts, definitions and measurement frameworks developed to capture social exclusion (or inclusion);
- b) Current involvement of national statistical offices in producing and disseminating data relevant to social exclusion (or inclusion);

- c) Important data gaps relating to social exclusion that could be filled by official statistics;
- d) The extent to which national statistical offices should develop better services for the monitoring of the various aspects of social exclusion.

B. Gaps in gender statistics

19. In light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gender equality and women's empowerment take an increasingly important place among global policy concerns. The need to monitor the fifth SDG on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as the broad and deep inclusion of gender concerns throughout the 2030 Agenda are creating a growing demand for high-quality gender statistics.

20. The CES Bureau reviewed gender statistics comprehensively in 2007 based on a report by Italy, which outlined progress being made by international organizations and made some recommendations for national statistical offices. Since then a broad range of activities in gender statistics have been undertaken under CES: production of materials for NSOs including a manual on developing gender statistics, training videos and a toolkit for trainers; developing a set of indicators of gender equality; national and regional capacity-building; and a database. An in-depth review ten years on would be able to examine the effect of these activities on NSOs and propose further activities on which the CES Steering Group on Gender Statistics could follow up. The in-depth review could also consider initiatives of several other organizations active in this area, such as the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Population Fund, UN Women and the European Institute for Gender Equality.

21. Specific areas to be examined by the in-depth review could include, among others:
- a) Identifying persistent gaps in production, such as in the measurement of violence against women and in collection of time-use data, where concepts and methodology have been developed but collection remains limited;
 - b) Assessing the need for methodological and conceptual work to meet demand for increasingly complex and emerging phenomena;
 - c) Identifying shortcomings in dissemination and communication, in producer-user interactions and in empowering users to draw conclusions relevant to policymaking;
 - d) Determining capacity-building needs of member countries.

ISSUES RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION

C. Definition of national statistical systems

22. The need to define more explicitly the national statistical systems and designate clearly the producers of official statistics has come across from several initiatives. The borders of statistical systems were considered in the drafting of a Generic Law on Official Statistics, developed in a United Nations Development Account project for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Global Assessments of national statistical systems carried out in these countries have also recommended clarifications of the national statistical systems and official statistics. The peer reviews carried out at the European Statistical System in 2013-

2015 made several recommendations to countries on the need to establish a clearer definition of the national statistical system and official statistics.

23. Furthermore, the national statistical systems should cooperate with producers outside official statistics in the context of monitoring SDGs. This highlights again the need to identify which producers are outside of the statistical system, and what are the legal, organizational and other issues arising in this cooperation. A clear definition of the national statistical system would also facilitate data sharing among producers and the use of administrative data sources, which are key issues for improving the quality of official statistics and the efficiency of statistical production.

24. The Generic Law on Official Statistics defines the national statistical system as consisting of the national statistical office, which is the leading agency of the national statistical system, and other producers of official statistics. The other producers should be professionally independent organizational entities of national authorities that develop, produce and disseminate official statistics as their main task in accordance with the national statistical legislation. In addition, other producers of official statistics shall be defined by the Chief Statistician, in this case in the annual statistical programme.

25. The in-depth review would consider the following issues:

- a) What main types of organizing national statistical systems can be identified in CES countries? What are their features, benefits and challenges?
- b) What does the national statistical system typically entail? Is there a unified definition that exists across countries?
- c) What are the criteria for including statistical producers in the national statistical system? What are the reasons for excluding some producers or statistics?
- d) What are the benefits of having an explicitly defined national statistical system? Could this enable efficiencies through closer collaboration and better data sharing?

26. A follow-up to this in-depth review could consider a definition of the international statistical system, its scope, responsibilities, rights and borders.

D. Integrating statistics into decision making

26. The *Recommendations on Value of Official Statistics* note that statistics should get at the centre of decision making. Statistics need to be more integrated into society, especially to decision making. This was also noted in the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda². The Report points out the opportunities to “strengthen data and statistics for accountability and decision-making purposes” and calls for action by the statistical community to “fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access to, and use of data”.

27. The review would seek information about advanced solutions for serving decision making and consider what could be done to improve the situation. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

² www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

- a) Considering what is meant by integrating statistics into decision making and how does that relate to professional independence of statistical offices;
- b) How statistical offices communicate with decision makers at different levels, such as policy makers, private companies, individuals, etc.
- c) Taking stock of innovative solutions, tools or mechanisms that enable integrating statistics into decision making;
- d) What kind of new products and services have been developed to integrate statistics better into decision making?
- e) What should be the role of statistical offices vis a vis decision making? How integrated should we be? How to develop the role of statisticians internationally?

E. Capacity building for monitoring SDGs

36. The first assessments of readiness of countries to provide data on SDG indicators show that currently NSOs are able to produce something between one third and half of the indicators. A lot of statistical training and capacity building is needed, including in developed countries. The *Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals* adopted by CES in June 2015 includes the commitment to “develop statistical capacity in countries to ensure good quality reporting on SDGs” and highlights that “additional effort and investments will be required to maintain the necessary infrastructure for the production of statistics”. Furthermore, two SDG targets, no. 17.18 and 17.19 are explicitly focused on capacity building³.

37. The aim of this in-depth review would be to make an overview of the issues of statistical capacity building related to SDGs and of the involved partners and their cooperation mechanisms. Specific topics to be covered could include:

- a) Define the scope of capacity building and clarify the different terms used (e.g. capacity building, technical assistance, statistical training, capabilities, etc.);
- b) Stocktaking of different options for improving capacities of statistical offices;
- c) Exploring the most urgent areas for capacity building to enable monitoring SDGs, using the outcomes of the UNECE survey on NSO strategies and plans related to SDGs as a basis;
- d) Identifying key partners for capacity building;
- e) Considering how to use existing expert forums, groups and networks to support capacity building;
- f) Suggesting effective cooperation mechanisms among statistical offices and international statistical organizations.

³ **Target 17.18:** “By 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”

Target 17.19: “By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.”

F. Statistical communication related to SDGs

38. The high policy attention to data and statistics in the context of SDGs have emphasized the importance of communication in monitoring SDGs. The communication should cover both data themselves and data-related issues such as quality, resource requirements, availability and the value of official statistics. This includes communication with policy makers on the indicators, their limitations and availability (managing expectations), of the value and special role of official statistics vis-à-vis other data providers, the importance of statistical quality, etc.

39. Different groups are working on statistical communication. E.g. UNECE has a series of meetings on statistical communication under the High-level group for the Modernization of Official Statistics. These groups deal with communication more from a technical viewpoint, although from time-to-time they consider also some more strategic issues. The in-depth review would analyse the work on statistical communication from a strategic perspective, in particular in the context of SDGs, to consider:

- a) what are the emerging issues in statistical communication;
- b) which groups are working in the area and what activities they are undertaking;
- c) what resources are available, and
- d) are there gaps and emerging issues in statistical communication that are not addressed.

40. For example, one emerging issue would be to follow-up from the work of the Task Force on the value of official statistics to ensure that communicating the value would be taken on board in the communication strategies of statistical offices.

ANNEX 1

Topics reviewed in-depth since 2012

- 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)
- 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)
- Population projections (Oct 2014, paper by the United Kingdom and Canada)
- Measuring extreme events and disasters (Oct 2014, paper by Mexico)
- Process oriented approach to statistical production (Feb 2015, paper by Turkey)
- Labour mobility and globalisation (Feb 2015, paper by Austria)
- Strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry (Oct 2015, paper by Canada)
- Diversification of population census methodology and sources (Oct 2015, paper by Finland and Turkey)
- Developing geospatial information services (Feb 2016, paper by United Kingdom)
- Measuring governance (Oct 2016, paper by Turkey, Mexico and OECD)
- Exchange of economic data and data sharing (Oct 2016, paper by Finland)
- Data integration (Feb 2017, paper by HLG-MOS)

ANNEX 2
Classification of International Statistical Activities
(DISA classification, 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

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