

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

For decision

Meeting of the 2017/2018 Bureau  
Helsinki (Finland), 14-15 February 2018

Item II (d) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS  
IN 2018-2019**

**Note by the Secretariat**

*The Bureau is invited to select topics to be reviewed in-depth in 2018-2019 and nominate countries or international organizations to prepare a paper for each review.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly reviews selected statistical areas in-depth 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, including a template for papers are provided in ECE/CES/2012/5<sup>1</sup>.
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](http://www.unece.org/disa)), but the selection is not limited to those topics.
5. Annex I provides a list of topics that have been reviewed since 2012. Annex II provides the Classification of Statistical Activities.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2012/5-Organization\\_of\\_indepth\\_reviews.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2012/5-Organization_of_indepth_reviews.pdf)

## **II. LIST OF POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

### **Subject-matter issues**

- A. Various types of satellite accounts
- B. Measuring gender identity
- C. Well-being indicators
- D. Gaps in environmental statistics for SEEA implementation
- E. International migration and cross-border mobility

### **Issues related to management and organization of statistical production**

- F. Production of global statistics
- G. Regional and small-area statistics: the case of cities
- H. Review of the use of satellite image data for official statistics

## **III. EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE TOPICS**

### **SUBJECT-MATTER ISSUES**

#### **A. Various types of satellite accounts**

6. In recent years, there has been a growing interest from users' community for more detailed statistical data that address their specific needs. It is useful if these data are presented in relation to well-established statistics produced by national statistical offices, such as national accounts. As a result, there has been increasing tendency of countries to produce satellite accounts. A number of handbooks are developed by different national and international organizations (on tourism satellite accounts, national health accounts, national education accounts, arts and cultural production satellite accounts, transportation satellite account, sport and recreation accounts, satellite accounts on ICT, etc). This development can cause significant strain on the resources of statistical offices. Also, in cases where the satellite accounts are produced by other agencies, the statistical office needs to ensure that methods applied follow internationally agreed guidance.

7. The proliferation of satellite accounts is being addressed by the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts and the role of satellite accounting will be further discussed by the 2018 May meeting of the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Group of Expert on National Accounts. Following the outcome of these discussions the Bureau may wish to review in future the various types of satellite accounts produced in countries and the role of statistical offices in coordinating their production.

#### **B. Measuring gender identity**

8. The CES Bureau reviewed the overall field of gender statistics in 2017. One of the areas mentioned during the Bureau's discussion was the constantly evolving and often politically sensitive landscape of gender and gender identity, both in public discourse and in legal frameworks. These changes bring with them a need to respond with appropriate statistical measures which capture what is important to the population.

9. The statistical measurement of gender identity was chosen as a priority topic by participants in the November 2017 UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics. The Steering Group on Gender Statistics was asked to conduct exploratory work to examine the need for international coordination, and the possible role of UNECE in this.

10. Some countries have already invested much effort investigating the statistical needs and implications of the changing gender identity environment, including making changes to census questions, conducting qualitative and quantitative research and developing standards at the national level. Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand are at the forefront of such efforts and have produced findings and guidance which could serve as a useful foundation for other countries.

11. Several other UNECE member States, meanwhile, have seen important changes in the legislation surrounding, for example, the legal recording of sex at birth, the ability to change one's gender identity later in life, and the ways in which sex and gender are recorded on official forms and administrative records. Each of these legislative changes is likely, in due course, to have implications both for the availability of statistical data and for the kinds of statistics that NSOs are called upon to produce. It would be valuable, therefore, for an in-depth review to draw together what has been learned so far from the countries already engaged in this area, and to consider how their findings can be used to guide those just setting out. At the same time, the 'frontrunner' countries would benefit from developing a unified stance at this stage.

12. Specific areas to be examined by the in-depth review could include, among others:

- a) Identifying the range of social and legal imperatives that might necessitate collecting data on the *size* and *characteristics* of the population with a gender identity that does not correspond to their sex given at birth;
- b) Identifying users' needs and potential practical uses for such data;
- c) Exploring the challenges in gathering data on gender identity:
  - concepts and terminology which are both dynamic and often misinterpreted, and/or interpreted differently by different sectors of the population,
  - deciding what questions to ask, and on which surveys, in order to balance the need for correct interpretation of questions with the need to minimize respondent burden, including for the non-trans population,
  - public acceptability and risks of non-response,
  - privacy of respondents in census or household survey settings,
  - confidentiality and statistical accuracy of data on small population groups;
- d) Considering the possible impacts on social statistics of introducing a gender category other than male or female, such as effects on time series, population projections, and the impacts on male/female comparisons and policy-relevant messages about the different experiences of women and men.

### **C. Well-being indicators**

13. The CES Task Force on leading, composite and sentiment indicators is preparing its final report to be presented to the Bureau in October 2018. Part of the work touched upon well-being indicators. The Task Force identified the need for statistical guidance on producing well-being indicators since different practices exist.

14. Since the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report on measurement of economic performance and social progress (2009) there has been a growing interest in measuring well-being. Statistics on well-being and quality of life has attracted much attention by media and decision makers and raised discussions. Indicators of well-being, happiness or quality of life feed into national discussion but are also often used to rank countries, where they cause headlines like: “The happiest people in the world live in xx”, or “xx is the best country (or city) to live”.

15. Many well-being indicators are produced by other data providers than national statistical offices. Some international organizations produce well-being indicators, including Eurostat (Quality of life in Europe) and OECD (the Better life index), and a growing number of national statistical offices also produce indicators of well-being. However, the indicators include different dimensions of well-being (e.g. income, employment, health, education, safety, social inclusion, transport), different individual indicators are used for the construction of the dimension indicators, and a variety of methods are used for the weighting and aggregation of the individual indicators into composite measure.

16. An in-depth review of the measurement of well-being could take stock of current practices and discuss the need and the possibility to develop a statistical framework for compiling well-being indicators to guide countries that produce or consider producing such indicators.

17. The Task Force on leading, composite and sentiment indicators established by the CES Bureau in 2016 is expected to present its final report to the CES plenary session in 2019. Part of the Task Force’s work also touched upon well-being indicators. It is suggested that an in-depth review should await the final report of the Task Force on leading, composite and sentiment indicators to take the findings into account.

#### **D. Gaps in environmental statistics for SEEA implementation (DISA 3.1 Environment)**

18. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) relies on basic environment statistics such as statistics on natural resources (water, energy, forest, flows of materials and pollutants) which are usually collected for specific purposes and often by different agencies. Although SEEA can also be used as a tool to identify gaps in environmental statistics and improve their consistency, providing comprehensive accounts requires large amounts of data. There are still many important gaps in environmental statistics that delay SEEA implementation in countries.

19. The UN Statistical Commission, in 2014, recognized SEEA as an important statistical framework for the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, and requested that stocktaking exercises be continued with inputs from countries and regions based on SEEA in particular. Furthermore, SEEA implementation should be linked with that of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008. UNECE has drafted a regional strategy for the SNA 2008 implementation in the countries with developing statistical systems. A review of key gaps of environmental statistics considering SEEA implementation in UNECE countries would provide the basis for developing a similar approach for SEEA and would inform priority setting and capacity building programmes of many statistical organizations.

20. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:  
a) Exploring current gaps in environmental statistics in UNECE region;

- b) Analyzing the conclusions of Global Assessments of national statistical systems regarding development needs in statistical data for SEEA;
- c) Analyzing the results of the UNSD SEEA Implementation Global Assessment Survey;
- d) Considering the outcomes and recommendations of the Joint OECD/UNECE Seminars on SEEA Implementation;
- e) Identifying priority data gaps for SEEA implementation and recommending a course of action to support countries in filling these gaps.

## **E. International migration and cross-border mobility**

36. The importance of improving migration data was recently reaffirmed at the highest political level in the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants of 2016 and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The topic remains high up in the current negotiation phase of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. A group of international organizations, including UNECE and led by OECD, IOM and UNDESA, organized the first International Forum on Migration Statistics in Paris in January 2018. Under CES, since the 2014 plenary session seminar on this topic, five methodological guides on migration statistics have been prepared and the joint UNECE-Eurostat work sessions on this topic take place annually.

37. With all this policy demand, international exchange and methodological work, gaps in migration statistics persist and new challenges are emerging. Better inter-agency cooperation and data exchange has been shown as the main avenue of improvement, yet progress remains slow, as decision-making on these matters is largely outside the statistical system. At the same time, labour mobility, circular moves between countries, different forms of short-term migration and commuting are increasing in magnitude and policy relevance. These forms of mobility are not captured through changes of usual place of residence and regular statistics on (long-term) migration. Their measurement requires integration of different sources. New sources, such as satellite imaging and ‘big data’ type of sources may open new opportunities, but their applications that could be used for producing statistics remain scarce.

38. The in-depth review could address, among others, the following issues:
- a) How to leverage the increasing policy demand for migration statistics for improving cooperation among agencies that collect data
  - b) How to improve statistics on short-term migration
  - c) How is existing and recent CES methodological guidance implemented
  - d) How to achieve practical gains from new technologies for regular production of statistics on international migration and cross-border mobility
  - e) What are the conceptual issues that would require further clarification and agreement on the international level?

## ISSUES RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION

### F. Production of global statistics (DISA 5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles; role and organization of official statistics)

26. National statistical systems provide statistics for countries. However, the economic and social life of people is becoming more and more global. Environmental issues do not stop at borders. There is interest in producing data and analyzing the economy of regions crossing national borders. One example is the Arctic governance project “The Economy of the North” aiming to present a comprehensive overview of the economy of the circumpolar Arctic, its importance from a global perspective, with particular focus on natural resources.

27. Several global resources are important from sustainability viewpoint, such as climate, air, oceans, etc. Some of these topics are considered in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related goals and targets are being established (e.g. SDG 14 on oceans). In the context of social capital, the importance of international institutions, multinational treaties, environmental conventions, etc. has been pointed out (e.g., SDG 16 on institutions, SDG 17 on global partnership). For example, Switzerland has an indicator on multinational treaties in its SDI set.

28. The in-depth review paper could make an overview of:

- a) The scope of “global statistics”: in what areas “global” statistics are needed and what topics should be covered;
- b) Which countries and organizations are active in this area and what is done;
- c) How are the global resources measured (such as climate, oceans, air, international governance - international organizations, treaties and conventions, etc. );
- d) What is the relation with official statistics? Is/should some of this be covered by official statistics and by whom?

### G. Regional and small area statistics: the case of cities (DISA 3.3 Regional and small area statistics)

29. The outcome document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* recognizes the importance of sustainable urban development and management to people’s quality of life (SDG 11). It indicates the necessity of working with local authorities and communities to plan cities and human settlements to foster community cohesion, personal security and to stimulate innovation and employment. In addition, there is a need to minimize impacts of cities on the global climate system.

30. Given the increasing urbanization and agglomeration, the quality of life in cities is a matter of concern to policymakers. Among other issues, cities are often responsible for provision of public services in areas such as education and health. Data on cities, however, often do not come from traditional official statistics or from national statistical systems. In many cases, they are not even integrated at the national level. However, such data would be needed for measuring the SDG 11 and the question is whether these data will or should come from outside the statistical system. Furthermore, there are international initiatives to develop indicators on sustainable cities where official statistics are not involved.

31. The objective of this in-depth review would be to explore what type of data national statistical offices collect on cities and where and how these data are disseminated. Some of the issues this in-depth review might cover are:

- a) Which types of cities' statistics are collected at the national level or in official statistics. Possible examples are housing, public services provision (i.e. education, health care, waste management, kindergarten facilities), transportation and traffic;
- b) Reporting mechanisms of cities statistics from city-level to national level;
- c) Frequency and availability of cities statistics;
- d) Communication strategies currently used to inform the general statistics user (i.e. use of maps).

32. For this in-depth review, partnerships with academia or think-tanks could be considered (i.e. LSE Cities Programme, Brookings Global Cities Initiatives).

#### **H. Review of the use of satellite image data for official statistics**

33. The international statistical community has been investigating the use of "Big Data" sources for several years, building on pilot work under the Conference of European Statisticians. One of the outcomes is that few "Big Data" sources are suitable for use in official statistics by themselves. Issues of coverage and sustainability mean that they are, at best, just part of the picture, and often need to be combined with other data sources to extract their value. The main exception to this is data from satellite images. These data are freely available to all, in standard formats, with global coverage. This means that the use of satellite image data is an ideal area for international collaboration. The standard nature of the data means that methods and tools can be easily shared.

34. There is increasing interest in many countries in satellite image data as a source for statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as for areas such as agriculture and land-use statistics. Satellite images of settlements are also being used to plan and validate censuses of population and housing in several countries.

35. There are currently various initiatives at the national and international levels to harness the potential of satellite image data for official statistics. For example, there is a task team led by Canada on this topic, under the UN Global Working Group on Big Data. There are also specific projects in countries such as Australia, China, India and Mongolia, including cases where satellite image data are already in use in the production of official statistics.

36. As we move towards full implementation of the SDG indicators, this seems to be a good time to take stock of what has been done so far, and the work currently under way. This would help determine how the results and ideas from the work so far can best be applied and further developed within the member countries of the Conference of European Statisticians.

**ANNEX I**  
**TOPICS REVIEWED IN-DEPTH SINCE 2012**

- Banking, insurance and financial statistics (Nov 2012, by IMF)
- Poverty statistics (Nov 2012, by Ukraine and Eurostat)
- Statistics related to population ageing (Nov 2012, by UNECE)
- Political and other community activities, incl. volunteering (Feb 2013, by Mexico)
- Entrepreneurship (Oct 2013, by OECD and Eurostat)
- Big Data (Oct 2013, by UNECE with input from a Task Team on Big Data)
- Social protection (Jan 2014, by UNECE)
- Leading, composite and sentiment indicators (Jan 2014, by UNECE)
- Population projections (Oct 2014, by the United Kingdom and Canada)
- Measuring extreme events and disasters (Oct 2014, by Mexico)
- Process oriented approach to statistical production (Feb 2015, by Turkey)
- Labour mobility and globalisation (Feb 2015, by Austria)
- Strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry (Oct 2015, by Canada)
- Diversification of census methodology and sources (Oct 2015, by Finland and Turkey)
- Developing geospatial information services (Feb 2016, by United Kingdom)
- Measuring governance (Oct 2016, by Turkey, Mexico and OECD)
- Exchange of economic data and data sharing (Oct 2016, by Finland)
- Data integration (Feb 2017, by New Zealand, Canada and UNECE)
- Emerging issues in statistical communication (Oct 2017, by Ireland)
- Gaps in gender statistics (Oct 2017, by Mexico)
- Measuring social exclusion (Feb 2018, by Canada and Mexico)
- Redefining national statistical systems (Feb 2018, by UNECE)

**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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