

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (virtual), 15-16 October 2020

Item IV(e) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TASK FORCE ON STATISTICS ON CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH:
WORK PLAN**

Prepared by the Task Force

In February 2020, the Bureau approved the terms of reference of the Task Force on Statistics on Children, Adolescents and Youth and asked the Task Force to present a work plan that reflects comments provided by the Bureau and OECD. The work plan takes into account the two-step strategy recommended by the Bureau, describes the challenges and objectives associated with the work, and clarifies the sequence of activities and deliverables.

The Bureau approved the work plan of the Task Force.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in June 2019, UNICEF called for CES to address information gaps for children, adolescents and youth, for children in residential care and for violence against children (ECE/CES/97). In October 2019, the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia presented its statistical activities to the CES Bureau. The Bureau invited UNICEF to develop a proposal for activities under CES to review the availability and quality of data on children, adolescents, and youth.

2. In February 2020, the Bureau established a Task Force on Statistics on Children, Adolescents and Youth with the objective to prepare guidance to improve the availability, quality and comparability of statistics on children, adolescents and youth, and to develop recommendations for more consistent and harmonized definitions, methodologies and approaches across the countries participating in the work of CES.

3. The Bureau asked the Task Force to focus on three policy-relevant areas (see section II), to consider various data sources, and be mindful of the practical and ethical challenges of collecting data on children. The Bureau invited the Task Force to present a work plan in October 2020 that reflects a two-step strategy: first the Task Force should make an overview of the current situation concerning definitions, standards and methods, and then tackle the focus areas.

4. The following countries and international organizations are participating in the Task Force: Canada (Chair), Sweden, United Kingdom, Eurostat, OECD and UNICEF. The Task Force held teleconferences in June and July 2020 to initiate the work and agree on the scope of work. Discussions were based on a briefing notes prepared by UNICEF and the Chair (Canada).

II. OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS AREAS OF THE TASK FORCE

5. The concept note and terms of reference of the Task Force approved by the Bureau describe the significant data gaps around data on children, adolescents and youth in the UNECE region. Data gaps in middle and high-income countries exist across sectors: health and nutrition, quality education, and violence, abuse and exploitation. Notably, information on disability is often not available, and children outside of family care (often in institutional care) are missing from official statistics.

6. Non-standard definitions and methodologies contribute to data gaps from an internationally comparable perspective. Inconsistencies exist even for definitions of essential concepts such as ‘child’, ‘adolescent’ and ‘youth’. Additional data gaps are for disaggregated data. Administrative data systems do not always include the variables required for disaggregation (e.g. sex or child age); surveys often lack the sample sizes necessary to study small population subgroups (e.g. children with disabilities). For topics that relate to very small population groups, there is a limited will or capacity to develop harmonized methods or produce internationally comparable statistics.

7. Certain indicators related to children, adolescents and youth have no internationally recognized methodology (such as tier III SDG indicators). For other indicators, there is an established international standard but it is not applied in many countries (e.g. the Washington Group measure of disability). Moreover, there may also be legal and ethical considerations that restrict the collection or reporting of certain characteristics, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children.

8. The aim of the Task Force is to begin to address these data gaps. The main objectives of Task Force are (1) to improve the availability, quality, and comparability of statistics on children, adolescents, and youth; and (2) to work towards recommendations for more consistent and harmonized definitions, methodologies and approaches across the countries participating in the work of CES.

9. To achieve these objectives, the Task Force will work in two phases: beginning with (1) an overview of the current situation concerning definitions, standards and methods used in the statistics on children and youth, and then (2) addressing three focus areas in more detail.

10. The Bureau endorsed the three focus areas proposed for the Task Force:

- (a) Violence against children, adolescents, and youth;
- (b) Children and adolescents in institutional care;
- (c) Children, adolescents and youth with disabilities.

11. These areas were identified as priorities due to their policy relevance, the associated demand for quality data, and the existing methodological gaps. The CES Bureau asked also to consider how these areas intersect with issues such as child poverty, education and other well-being outcomes. In its recommendations, the Task Force will provide examples of how to consider these outcomes across the focus areas.

III. ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

12. **The first phase** of the work will provide an overview of the existing definitions, standards and methods used in statistics on children and youth in CES countries and will involve the following activities and outputs:

- (a) Compile an inventory of existing international and national data sources for statistics on children and youth, considering surveys, administrative and new types of data sources;
- (b) Review definitions, standards and methods used in statistics on children and youth, and evaluate comparability of child-related statistics;
- (c) Document practical and ethical challenges faced by NSOs and other data producers in data collection and reporting on children.

13. During the first phase of work the Task Force will consult experts from national statistical offices (and other national data producers if necessary) and from international organizations working on statistics on children, adolescents and youth to ensure that the required information is collected from the relevant data sources.

14. The outcome of the work during the first phase will be reported to the Bureau.

15. **The second phase** of work will involve producing recommendations for addressing data gaps and improving international harmonization in the three focus areas. The following activities and outputs are planned:

- (a) In each focus area, identify data gaps that could be addressed using existing sources through improved international harmonization;
- (b) Develop recommendations to statistical offices for addressing the data gaps;
- (c) Collect and present good national practices in producing, disseminating and communicating statistics in each focus area, including examples of links with wellbeing outcomes such as poverty and education;
- (d) Develop recommendations to statistical offices for harmonizing the definitions, methodologies and approaches used across countries and international organizations around statistics on children and youth.

16. The output of the Task Force will be a guidance that summarizes findings and provides recommendations in each of the three focus areas. Included in the guidance will be an introduction that justifies the three focus areas within the broader context of statistics on children, adolescents and youth.

17. Chapters of the guidance are proposed as follows:

- (a) Description of focus areas and their policy relevance
- (b) Existing definitions, standards, and methods
- (c) Challenges and data gaps

(d) Examples of best practices

(e) Recommendations

IV. TIMETABLE

June-September 2020	Formation of the Task Force, development of work plan, division of work among Task Force members - <i>done</i>
October 2020 – February 2021	Phase 1: Inventory and review of existing data sources, definitions, standards and methods used in statistics on children, adolescents and youth across CES countries (including those applied by international organisations)
March-May 2021	Phase 1: Expert consultations on data sources, definitions, standards and methods, and on practical and ethical challenges associated with collecting and reporting data on children
June 2021	Progress report to the CES Bureau
June-October 2021	Phase 2: Review and analysis of collected information; development of recommendations for addressing data gaps and harmonizing definitions, methods and approaches
November-December 2021	Prepare draft guidance
February 2022	Review the draft guidance by the CES Bureau
March 2022	Revision of guidance based on the comments by the CES Bureau
April-May 2022	Electronic consultation among all CES members and revision of guidance
June 2022	Expected endorsement by the CES plenary session

V. PROPOSAL

18. **The Bureau is invited to comment on and approve the work plan of the Task Force.**