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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty-seventh plenary session
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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE STATISTICAL
PROGRAMME AND WORK OF THE CONFERENCE'S TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS**

**PROGRESS REPORTS ON OTHER TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS WORKING UNDER
THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

Report of the Joint UNECE-UNODC Meeting on Crime Statistics

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Joint UNECE-UNODC Work Session on Crime Statistics was held on 21-23 October 2008 in Vienna. It was attended by participants from Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The European Commission was represented by Eurostat. The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA), TRANSCRIME and the Centre for Analytic Studies and Development were also represented.
2. Ms. Soula McFarlane (Australia) was elected as the Chairperson of the meeting.
3. The following substantive topics, corresponding to sections of the UNODC-UNECE Manual on Victimization Surveys ("the Manual") were discussed at the meeting:

Item 1: Introduction, key issues for policy makers, methodological issues (goals and objectives of crime victim surveys, budget, time frame and other constraints of crime victim surveys)

Item 2: Survey coverage, survey sample frames, and sample design

Item 3: Survey respondents, frequency of surveys, data collection, and reference period.

Items 4 and 5: Survey content and comparability of data across countries including core issues

Item 6: Questionnaire design

Item 7: Interviewing, data processing, data analysis, estimation and presentation, and pilot surveys

Item 8: Analysis and interpretation of data quality, languages and cultural considerations, ethical considerations, data dissemination and documentation, evaluating surveys

Item 9: Development of an agenda for future work

4. The following participants acted as presenters of the different sessions: Item 1 - Soula Macfarlane (Australia); Item 2 – Michael Rand (USA); Item 3 – Jon Simmons (UK); Items 4 and 5 – Anna Alvazzi del Frate (UNODC); Item 6 – M. Giuseppina Muratore (Italy); Item 7 – Jodi-Anne Brzozowski (Canada); Item 8 – Sami Nevala (EU-FRA); Item 9 – Soula Macfarlane (Australia) and M. Giuseppina Muratore (Italy).

5. The following participants acted as discussants: Item 1 – Steven Malby (UNODC), Item 2 – Jaroslav Novak (Czech Republic); Item 3 – Kutt Kommel (Estonia), Items 4 and 5 – Kauko Aromaa (HEUNI); Item 6 – Joanna Goodey (EU-FRA); Item 7 – Baiba Zukula (Latvia); Item 8 – Victor Garcia (Portugal).

6. The discussion at the meeting was based on the draft Manual. The draft is available on the UNECE website at the following address:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.10.crime.htm>

7. The participants adopted the report of the meeting at its closing session.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. UNODC-UNECE Manual on Victimization Surveys

8. The Meeting expressed its thanks and congratulated the Task Force on the work done to develop the first complete draft of the Manual. The Meeting agreed that after the Manual has been presented to the Conference of European Statisticians (“CES”) in June 2009, the Task Force will have completed its work and could then be disbanded.

9. It was noted that, as a result of individual chapters of the Manual being brought together for the first time, some work still remains to be done, including completing missing parts and making changes to the draft agreed by the meeting (presented in detail within this Report), which resulted in a new Table of Contents (see Annex 1).

10. The Meeting noted that the Manual should be finalized by June 2009, to be presented for adoption by the CES. In order to meet this deadline, all further amendments should be received

by UNODC from Meeting members by the end of November 2008. No substantive amendments will be accepted after this time. These amendments will then be reviewed and finalised by the Task Force by the end of December 2008.

11. A working draft of the Manual will be completed by the end of January 2009 to be reviewed by the Bureau of the CES in February 2009. The substantive version approved by the Bureau will be subject to final editing. The Meeting also proposed that the Manual should be presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission, tentatively in February 2010.

12. The Meeting asked UNODC and UNECE to identify resources needed to ensure that the Manual is properly edited and finalized in accordance with this proposed timescale.

13. The Meeting agreed that a core list of items to be included as a minimum in victimization surveys would be a useful addition to the Manual (see Annex 2). Such core items would neither provide a detailed description nor offer a high degree of comparability across countries. Rather, these core items are presented as high-level headings which should be contextualized according to national needs and in-line with discussion on survey content contained in the Manual.

14. The Meeting also agreed that a shorter summary version of the Manual should be prepared.

B. FUTURE WORK

15. The Meeting discussed the possibility that the CES could carry out future work within the field of crime classifications to be used for statistical purposes at the international level. Participants noted a European Commission initiative to develop a European crime classification system for statistical purposes and recent discussions by an expert group organized by the United Nations Statistical Division on the possible development of a crime classification system at global level.

16. The Meeting recognized the benefit of having the CES, the European Commission and UNODC work together in relation to crime classification projects and the potential for a group of statistical experts to provide input. Participants agreed that interested member countries could carry out preparatory work related to the classification issue, and proposed that a new task force be established by CES. The Meeting asked UNODC and UNECE to prepare draft terms of reference for a new task force, to include the following broad activities: (i) developing a set of principles around international crime classification systems for statistical use; (ii) undertaking a case study of selected offences; and (iii) working with the European Commission on the current EU level classification project. A more detailed account of the discussion on future work can be found at paragraphs 40-43 of this report.

III. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

17. In the introductory remarks, the Chairperson summarized the aims of the meeting. These were to finalize the draft of the Manual and to propose an agenda for future work in the field of crime statistics.

18. UNECE presented a summary of the work of the development of the Manual and the Task Force to date. The presentation noted that the manual on victimization surveys had been first proposed by a joint UNECE-UNODC Meeting in Geneva in 2004. This meeting also created a Task Force on victim surveys consisting of seven countries (Australia, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States) and UNECE, UNODC, Eurostat and HEUNI. Work commenced with the creation of an inventory of some 80 victimization surveys in 30 countries in 2005. A first outline of the Manual was developed in 2006 and early drafts were discussed in Luxemburg and Bologna in 2007. The resulting draft was revised by a consultant and the Task Force in 2008 in preparation for this Meeting.

19. Eurostat presented a summary of the development of an EU victimization survey module based on the EU Action Plan 2006-2010.¹ Pursuant to the Action Plan, a common survey module has been developed and is in the course of being translated and tested by countries using various modes. The results of the survey module tests will be examined by a Eurostat working group meeting in February 2010. It was clarified by Eurostat that the aim of the proposed EU common survey module was to increase comparability of victim surveys carried out in EU Member states. Meeting participants agreed that it was important that work on the Manual and the work of the Task Force were coordinated with developments at the EU level. UNODC further provided an update on plans to implement an ICVS_2 in a limited number of countries.

20. UNODC highlighted the important role of victim surveys in improving international comparability of crime data. Cross-national comparison of data on crime was considered a priority for many policy makers. Meeting participants noted the need for joined-up international initiatives in order to avoid multiple surveys producing different results. UNODC observed that the Manual would play a key role in this respect and emphasized the importance of sharing of information on different cross-national initiatives.

Item 1: Introduction, key issues for policy makers, methodological issues (goals and objectives of crime victim surveys, budget, time frame and other constraints of crime victim surveys)

21. Meeting participants said that the Introduction to the Manual should be as clear as possible regarding the reasons underlying the need for victim surveys. Participants observed that some sections such as Chapter I.B (*Quality assurance*) may be dealt with more appropriately in other parts of the Manual. The Meeting agreed to move Chapter I.B to Part III of the Manual with a view to ensuring that the Introduction focused on defining the purpose of crime victim surveys and the Manual itself. Participants further discussed the range of historic surveys that should be included in Chapter I.C (*History of victim surveys*). It was agreed that examples chosen should reflect the range of historical development of crime victim surveys.

22. Participants also agreed that certain sections from Part II (*Key issues for policy makers*)

¹ Council and Commission Action Plan implementing the Hague Programme on strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union, Official Journal, C 198, 12.8.2005, page 13 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2005:198:SOM:EN:HTML>

could be moved to other parts of the Manual. It was agreed that Chapter II.A (*Use of victimization data for policy makers*) and Chapter II.B (*Limitations of crime victimization surveys*) should be merged and moved to the Introduction to the Manual. Following discussion on the level of detail required in Chapter II.D (*Relation between victimization surveys and official crime statistics*), it was agreed that this section would remain in Part II with a short discussion on this point to also be included in the Introduction to the Manual. The Meeting also decided to move Chapter II.C (*Which methodology should be used?*) to the beginning of Part III of the Manual and to move Chapter II.E (*Publication and dissemination*) to Chapter III.T (*Data dissemination and documentation*).

23. Within Part III (A-C), the Meeting agreed that the Manual should include some discussion in Chapter III.B (*Goals, objectives and history*) on the nature of crime victim survey clients, users and stakeholders. Meeting participants also discussed the value of including an illustrative breakdown of victimization survey costs and decided to retain the current approach taken by Chapter III.C (*Which methodology should be used?*).

24. The Meeting agreed that each chapter should start with a short introduction to present and explain its content. With respect to referencing and footnote style, it was agreed that the Manual would require final editing, including the adoption of a common referencing and footnote standard. The Meeting recommended that sources were provided by chapter in order to allow ease of reference. Participants also noted that the Manual should adopt a consistent method of section numbering. The Meeting also agreed that information on a number of variables (including frequency of enumeration, survey mode, and reference period) should be extracted from the inventory of crime victim surveys and presented in an Annex to the Manual. The Manual aimed to provide basic information and general concepts in terms that non-statisticians and non-sampling experts could understand. In particular, the Manual did not provide underlying equations or formulae.

Item 2: Survey coverage, survey sample frames, and sample design

25. Meeting participants decided that Chapter III.D (*Survey coverage*) should be renamed *target populations* and that additional wording should be added in the introduction to this section on target sub-populations.

26. The Meeting also decided to move the section in Chapter III.E (*Survey sample frames*) on sampling minority groups to Chapter III.F (*Sample design*) in order to ensure a more logical flow in this Part of the Manual. Participants further discussed the usefulness of providing an illustrative victimization survey budget and the clarity of the description of simple random sampling in Chapter III.F (*Sample design*). It was agreed to review wording on simple random sampling in order to make the description as clear as possible and to provide a list of budget items excluding actual cost figures as an Annex.

Item 3: Survey respondents, frequency of surveys, data collection, and reference period

27. The Meeting agreed that the section on how to count offences and victims in Chapter III.G (*Respondents*) should be moved to the beginning of Chapter III.I (*Content of the survey*). A short paragraph on this topic would also be included in Chapter II.B (*Limitations of crime*

victimization surveys). In addition, Meeting participants decided to move the whole of Chapter III.G (*Respondents*) to immediately before Chapter III.M (*Interviewing*). The introduction to the section would be expanded accordingly in order to ensure a smooth flow of topics. As a result of this move, the Meeting agreed that the section on minimizing non-response should retain its current position within the relocated Chapter.

28. Participants discussed the concepts of prevalence and incidence in the context of crime victim surveys and decided that the Manual would benefit from a box providing examples of these two different measures under the section on counting offences. Related to this point, participants agreed that additional drafting on the issues of cost, bias and data analysis associated with capping should be undertaken.

29. Discussion was held on the relative advantages and disadvantages of internet surveys and whether internet-based questionnaires warranted a more developed section in the Manual or could be included within other forms of self-complete questionnaires. Participants highlighted the growing importance of internet-based questionnaires and decided to expand the current small section on internet surveys within Chapter III.J (*Data collection and capture operations*) and to include examples and discussion as to when such surveys were particularly useful.

30. With respect to interview mode in general, the Meeting agreed that the Manual should be reviewed with a view to reflecting the relative advantages of interviewer-led victimisation surveys over self-completion surveys in most contexts. Meeting participants noted that the Manual should also balance carefully the relative merits of face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, including with respect to response rates. An additional box with an example of successful telephone interviewing would be added in Chapter III.J (*Data collection and capture operations*) to balance an existing example that shows the reverse.

Items 4 and 5: Survey content and comparability of data across countries including core issues

31. In Chapter III.I (*Content of the survey*), the Meeting discussed the way in which the Manual addressed questions that aimed to explore respondent's fear of crime and feelings of safety. Meeting participants noted that such questions should also look at dimensions of feelings of fear and other feelings, such as anger at having been a victim of crime. It was decided that this section of the Manual should be revised to reflect this approach. UNODC would also explore the possibility of inclusion of an Annex dealing with specialized safety and security surveys.

32. Participants continued by discussing a number of crime definitions, including the meaning and perception of hate crime, theft from vehicles, and the distinction between burglary and robbery where force was used against a victim inside the household. It was agreed that relevant sections of the Manual should be reviewed to reflect nuances of definition and possible cross-national differences. The Meeting noted that a number of sections in Chapter III.I (*Content of the survey*) still required completion, including a box on violence against women and a section on determining whether information can be obtained from other sources and linked to survey data.

33. With respect to Part IV (*Comparability of data across countries*) of the Manual, the

Meeting agreed that the Part should be reviewed in order to identify sections of text that might be placed more appropriately in other parts of the Manual. The section on data collection methods for example was agreed to be moved to Chapter III.J (*Data collection and capture operations*). Participants also raised the issue of references to ‘crime’ events as opposed to ‘victim-perceived’ events. The Meeting agreed that victimization surveys should attempt to approximate legal definitions of crime but decided to review references to ‘crime’ events in order to ensure that the Manual retained an appropriate balance in this respect.

34. The Meeting considered a proposal for core victimization survey items. The Meeting decided that the list of core items should represent the absolute minimum to be included in any crime victimization survey. Following discussion on the level of detail which should be provided in the core item descriptions, participants noted that the aim of the core items was not to provide a detailed description and a high degree of comparability. Rather, the core items should represent high-level headings which could be contextualized according to national needs and in-line with discussion on survey content contained elsewhere in the Manual. The Meeting agreed that the list of core items would be accompanied by explanatory text.

35. Meeting participants discussed the proposed core offences in turn. Following discussion on differences in the definition of sexual assault and whether the crime of rape should be included in such a category or dealt with separately, the meeting agreed on a high-level category of ‘sexual offences’. Equivalent discussion was also held on the level of detail required for assault, theft of cars, and burglary. The Meeting settled on high-level definitions in order to achieve flexibility and cross-national application. Participants also agreed to include a core offence of ‘other theft’ to cover contextually relevant crimes such as theft of a mobile phone or livestock. The agreed set of six core crimes is presented at Annex 2.

36. The Meeting also reviewed the core measurements applicable to each crime type. Participants noted the different information provided by measurements of prevalence and incidence. The Meeting agreed to leave the core questions and measurements as open as possible in this respect by specifying a ‘measure’ of victimization in the past 12 months and a ‘measure’ of repeat victimization in the past 12 months.

37. Other core question matters were reworded by the Meeting to remain as open as possible. These included ‘reporting to police’, ‘crime involving weapons’, ‘victims suffering physical injury’, ‘victim-offender relationship’, ‘public confidence/trust in police’ and ‘feelings of safety’. The agreed set of core measurements and question matters is presented at Annex 2.

Item 6: Questionnaire design

38. Whilst Meeting participants noted that Chapter III.L (*Questionnaire design*) could be made a little shorter through a more limited focus on particular areas, the Meeting decided to largely retain the existing structure of the Chapter and to focus on specific amendments. These included the inclusion of a ‘flowchart’ of typical survey question sequence, the creation of a new Chapter after III.L (*Questionnaire design*) on pilot testing, and relocation of the section on ‘focus groups as a qualitative methodology to support analysis of survey feasibility’ to the beginning of Chapter III.L. Meeting participants also agreed to remove the section on proxy responses in light of the fact that this issue was adequately covered elsewhere in the Manual.

39. The Meeting discussed how the Manual might most appropriately address the issue of survey questions on violence against women, particularly questions concerning sexual and intimate partner violence. Participants agreed to revise text on this topic with a view to replacing extensive reproduction of full survey questions with references to survey examples. Participants also discussed the content and structure of the section in Chapter III.L (*Questionnaire design*) on the Likert Scale. The Meeting decided to reduce the length of this section by removal of an example box and associated text.

IV. FUTURE WORK

40. The Meeting discussed the possibility that the CES could carry out future work within the field of crime classification to be used for statistical purposes at international level. Participants noted recent discussions by an expert group organized by the United Nations Statistical Division on the development of a possible classification system at global level. The Meeting was also briefed on a European Commission initiative to develop a European crime classification system for statistical purposes. The system is currently under development by a consultancy firm and is likely to be reviewed by the European Commission Directorate General Justice, Freedom and Security (DG-JLS) expert group on policy needs for criminal justice statistics in early 2009. The system will then be passed to the Eurostat working group for review.

41. Participants highlighted that such a classification would be useful but faced a number of significant challenges. Any classification for statistical purposes could not easily be imposed for use at local level and would not necessarily solve difficulties of cross-national comparability. Rather, in addition to a national legal classification system, a parallel, behavioural/event based classification – based on but not restricted by legal definitions - would be useful for grouping data for statistical purposes at the international level.

42. The Meeting observed that any classification system at EU level and other cross-national initiatives could link to wider global data collection. Participants noted that Eurostat, UNECE and UNODC are involved in the CES, agreed that interested member countries could carry out preparatory work related to the classification issue, and proposed that a new task force be established by the CES. The Meeting asked UNODC and UNECE to prepare draft terms of reference for a new task force, to include:

- (i) developing a set of principles around international crime classification systems for statistical use;
- (ii) undertaking a case study of selected offences; and
- (iii) working with the European Commission DG-JLS on the current EU level classification project. Canada (subject to confirmation), Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia (subject to confirmation), the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America expressed interest in participating in such a task force.

43. UNODC stated its interest in promoting technical support based on the Manual and reported that the draft Manual will be used during a joint UNODC-UNECA workshop in Addis Ababa in December 2008. Meeting participants noted that national statistical offices could participate in technical support activities (some are already doing so) and were ready to coordinate with UNODC in this respect.
