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## United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

**Workshop on Gender Statistics for Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia:  
Finding and Filling Gaps in Gender Statistics for SDG Monitoring**

Neuchâtel, Switzerland

13-14 May 2019

### Report

Note by the Secretariat

#### I. Organization and attendance

1. This capacity development workshop on gender statistics was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and UN Women. Financial support for the workshop was provided by these partners and by the United Nations Development Account project “Data and statistics” (10<sup>th</sup> tranche).
2. The workshop was attended by participants from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and CIS-Stat were also represented.
3. The workshop took place immediately before the UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics (15-17 May 2019).
4. The workshop programme and the slides used in the presentations are available on the meeting page of the UNECE website<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [bit.ly/unecegenderstats\\_eecca2019](https://bit.ly/unecegenderstats_eecca2019)  
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## II. Purpose

5. The purpose of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of participants:
  - a. to engage in constructive dialogue with policymakers and others who demand and use gender statistics, by assessing their needs and responding to such assessment
  - b. to produce and/or to interpret gender-oriented indicators for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically statistics on entrepreneurship with a gender perspective, and on women's representation in local government.
6. The workshop was designed principally to benefit experts dealing with gender statistics in national statistical offices (NSOs) in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

## III. Summary of proceedings

### A. Identifying gaps: Meeting the needs of policymakers

7. Identifying areas that lack data, or where data are not adequately meeting the demands of users, is an essential first step in improving gender statistics to meet the policymaking and monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This session focused on ways that statistical producers can discover and respond to the gender statistics needs of policymakers.
8. The session began with a consideration of the importance of viewing policymakers as a distinct user group with specific needs and capacities, in terms of both statistical literacy and gender literacy. The ongoing work of a UNECE Task Force on Communicating Gender Statistics was presented, focusing on a draft guidance note in which recommendations are currently being developed for interacting with users.
9. The session considered the variety of approaches that can be used to highlight areas where more or better data are needed, or where data could be better targeted to those who need and use them: NSO-wide or gender-statistics-specific user feedback surveys; stakeholder groups; workshops and seminars. Since user needs can change, the importance of their frequent assessment was emphasized.
10. National experiences from Azerbaijan and Albania and regional insights from CIS-Stat were shared in presentations. Experiences in Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan were also discussed. Discussion centred on how countries determine what kinds of gender statistics policymakers need and in what format they need them; what they do to ensure that they are meeting these

needs; and whether and why they have changed the way they assess and respond to such needs, or what might trigger them to do so in the future.

11. Some participants felt that the needs of policymakers do not need to be expressed through formal channels as they are made evident in the policies and plans themselves. Others argued that statisticians can be more proactive in helping to ensure that policies and plans specific statistical needs, and in making policymakers aware of the statistics that are or could be produced.

12. Participants stressed the importance of networking, both formal and informal, which reduces the burden of official communications and maintains the possibility of rapid feedback.

13. Discussion also covered the role of international policy frameworks in triggering increased demand for gender statistics among policymakers. The Beijing Platform for Action was cited by some participants as an early trigger for increased interaction between gender statisticians and policymakers, while the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is now acting as such a trigger for others.

## **B. Filling gaps: Entrepreneurship statistics with a gender dimension**

14. Entrepreneurship is widely considered essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Entrepreneurs have the potential to drive sustainable reductions in poverty and vulnerability, and support for entrepreneurship can foster innovations that can help achieve SDGs across the full range of development domains. Yet entrepreneurial activity continues to be much more associated with men than with women. Addressing this imbalance is particularly difficult due to a dearth of sex-disaggregated data that could permit identification of entrepreneurs by sex and by type of self-employment and entrepreneurship. Without such data, targeted policies are hard to formulate or evaluate.

15. This session of the workshop opened with a consideration of the value of applying a gender perspective to the production of entrepreneurship statistics, and an introduction to their production using household surveys, business surveys, business registers and other administrative sources. This overview also considered the concepts and definitions used in entrepreneurship statistics and the range of existing resources available to guide NSOs.

16. Mr Fabio Tomasini of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), as an invited expert, presented information about the experiences of Switzerland in using the Statistical Business Register to produce entrepreneurship statistics, and gave some examples of the gender-relevant conclusions that can be drawn from sex-disaggregation—such as in the kinds of economic activities where female sole proprietors predominate, and differences between men and women in the types of enterprises and the number of people employed.

17. The session showcased the recent experiences and future plans in this topic area in the Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Armenia and Kazakhstan.
18. All participating countries were asked to provide information in advance of the workshop about the production and use of sex-disaggregated entrepreneurship statistics and the challenges faced in producing them.
19. From the responses received it was evident that the greatest challenges are a lack of standardization in concepts and definitions and of coordination between institutions responsible for data collection; a lack of buy-in from policymakers and limited capacity among policymakers to make use of the data; and limitations in data access and data quality, such as low response rates and difficulties in obtaining administrative records.
20. A practical exercise required participants to work in groups to make proposals in four different areas (one area per group): improving uptake and use of entrepreneurship statistics with a gender perspective; improving access to and use of administrative sources for the production of such statistics; improving definitions and harmonization; and expanding data collection.
21. In reporting back on the group discussions, as well as in commenting on the preceding presentations, participants reiterated the importance of communicating the potential value of gender-based entrepreneurship statistics. Only when their potential is truly appreciated will policymakers make a sufficiently persuasive demand for them, so that it will become easier to argue for inclusion of the necessary information to permit sex disaggregation in surveys and administrative records.
22. Participants also expressed the need for additional practical guidance on producing entrepreneurship statistics with a gender dimension. UNECE has well established guidelines on business registers (*Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics*<sup>2</sup> and *Guidelines on statistical business registers*<sup>3</sup>) and gender statistics (*Developing gender statistics: a practical tool*<sup>4</sup>). Yet it was felt that practical guidance for integrating the entrepreneurship and gender aspects is needed. This would be of particular concern for countries that rely on surveys instead of a business register, and would have to take into account the 2018 update of the International Classification of Status in Employment<sup>5</sup>.
23. The session concluded with a call to keep all avenues open for the production of entrepreneurship statistics: business registers are not the only possibility and a range of new techniques and technologies are emerging with which gender statisticians should endeavour to engage.

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<sup>2</sup> Available from <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51127>

<sup>3</sup> Available from <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40574>

<sup>4</sup> Available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=17450>

<sup>5</sup> ICLS/20/2018/Resolution I, available from [https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/20/WCMS\\_648693/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/20/WCMS_648693/lang-en/index.htm)

## C. Filling gaps: Measuring women's representation in local government

24. Indicator 5.5.1(b) of the SDGs is 'proportion of seats held by women in local governments'. When the 2030 Agenda and its indicator framework were adopted, this indicator fell into tier III, meaning that there was no internationally-established definition or methodology and the indicator was not regularly produced by most countries. Since the adoption of the Agenda, UN Women, as the designated custodian agency, has developed detailed methodology and country-specific guidance, and has gathered data from all world regions.

25. This session of the workshop, led by Ms Ionica Berevoescu of UN Women, began with an overview of the rationale and the methodology for producing the indicator on women in local government, as well as the origins of the UNECE-UN Women collaboration in this area. The terms and definitions used to determine what should and should not be included, and the complexity arising from the large international variation in systems of local government, were explained in detail. While Electoral Management Bodies are recommended as the main data source, other sources were mentioned as possible alternatives to be used when necessary.

26. The session continued with a consideration of the first global data-gathering exercise undertaken in 2018, with a focus on the process and outcomes in the UNECE region. Country experiences from Georgia and Kazakhstan were presented to demonstrate the efforts needed to establish sustainable and accurate data collection.

27. A practical exercise invited participants to divide into groups and consider the objectives, stakeholders and processes needed to improve monitoring of women's political participation, including at the local level, from the perspective of three groups of actors: managers, data production coordinators and specialists in dissemination and communication.

28. The discussion following the group work highlighted the need to integrate the topic of political participation, including at the local level, into national statistical systems and statistical development plans. It was stressed that quality assessment of data is essential and must be ongoing.

29. Much of the discussion focused on the essential role of communicating statistics on women's political participation, with the knowledge that when such an issue come to the forefront of public consciousness it is more likely that people will pay attention to the numbers and make efforts to act upon them. The unique nature of political participation statistics as a shared product of statistical offices and electoral bodies was noted—it therefore falls to both kinds of entity to disseminate and communicate such statistics. Participants called for the support of international organizations to guide communications efforts, including the use of modern tools and presentation techniques to enhance user understanding.

## **D. Visit to the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland**

30. Workshop participants were invited to visit the FSO premises where Mr Stéphane Cotter, the Head of the Demography and Migration Unit, gave a welcome address. FSO representatives presented findings of recent Swiss research on gender equality, attitudes towards diversity and discrimination, and religion, spirituality and gender in Switzerland. Participants had the opportunity to discuss with the presenters and learn more about the methodology, the survey results and the social and cultural context in Switzerland.

## **IV. Conclusions**

31. The subtitle of the workshop, *Finding and Filling Gaps in Gender Statistics for SDG Monitoring*, drew attention to the fact that there are two distinct but related tasks needed to ensure adequate gender statistics to inform policymaking and policy monitoring: discovering and responding to policymakers' needs, on the one hand, and improving availability of gender-relevant data and statistics, on the other. The workshop addressed both of these challenges. Despite the diversity of subjects covered in the three main sessions, a common thread emerged from the presentations and discussions. This was that there is a crucial need for regular, two-way, targeted communication tailored specifically to policymakers as a special stakeholder group. Support from this core user group is key to bolstering NSOs' efforts to improve the availability of gender statistics for SDG monitoring.

32. The workshop was considered by participants to be a valuable opportunity for learning and for sharing knowledge and experience. The combination of presentations from invited experts, sharing of national experiences in participants' countries, and small group discussions and activities was found to be useful and effective.

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