

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General  
22 August 2013

Original: English

---

**Economic Commission for Europe**

Conference of European Statisticians

**Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses****Fifteenth Meeting**

Geneva, 30 September – 3 October 2013

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Economic and educational characteristics****Educational characteristics: Key results of the UNECE  
Survey on National Census Practices, and first proposals  
about the CES Recommendations for the 2020 census round****Note by the UNECE Task Force on economic and educational  
characteristics***Summary*

In early 2013, UNECE conducted an online survey among its member countries on national practices in the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. This document presents an overview of the main results of the survey on educational characteristics (part I), some first proposals by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) about the preparation of the new CES Recommendations for the 2020 Round of Censuses on educational characteristics (part II), and some comments by the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses on these proposals (part III). Proposed revisions to the CES Recommendations for the 2020 Round of Censuses on educational characteristics, reflecting also the comments of the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses, are presented in doc. ECE/CES/GE.41/2013/14/Add.1

## **I. Key results of the UNECE Survey on educational characteristics**

### **A. Survey question: Collection of information on educational attainment**

1. Of the 48 countries that responded to the questions on educational attainment, only the United Kingdom reported that it did not collect data specifically on this topic. Instead it included in its 2011 Census a question on highest level of educational qualification obtained. Nevertheless, this provides sufficient data for outputs to be presented using an algorithm to produce an approximation of the standard International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED):

- (a) Level 1 Primary (first stage of basic education).
- (b) Level 2 Lower secondary (second stage of basic education).
- (c) Level 3 Upper secondary education.
- (d) Level 4 Post-secondary, non-tertiary education.
- (e) Level 5 First stage of tertiary education.
- (f) Level 6 Second stage of tertiary education.

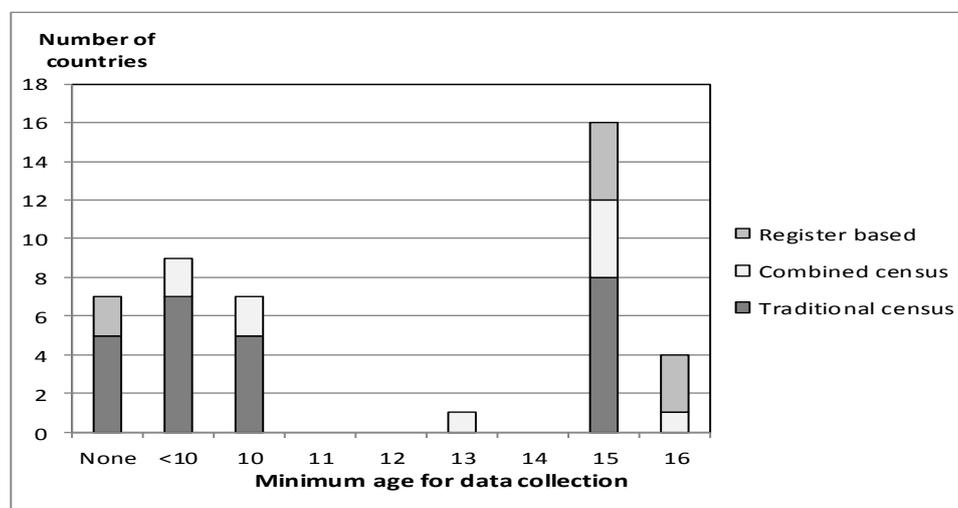
2. All of the responding countries except Kazakhstan and Tajikistan reported that they could provide data on the basis of the ISCED classification. This shows a particularly high level of compliance with the CES Recommendations, particularly so when 44 of the 49 countries that reported collecting this information (94 per cent) also reported that they fully adopted the CES definition of educational attainment as set out in paragraph 331 of the CES Recommendations. Finland reported that educational attainment and degrees undertaken abroad are not fully registered and thus there is significant under-coverage of educational data of the foreign population. But it is encouraging to note that no other register-based country reported significant definitional difficulties with this topic.

3. Although the CES Recommendations suggest that data on educational attainment should be collected for all persons aged 10 or over, only 23 of the responding countries (48 per cent) did so. However, to allow international comparisons, CES recommended that the minimum age should be at least 15. (This is also the minimum requirement for the European Union (EU) purposes.) Here at least there was greater compliance, and only four countries (three in EU) did not do so — where, in each case, the minimum age was 16.

4. Figure 1 shows the distribution of countries by minimum age. But the results of the survey show little correlation between minimum age and type of census methodology, except that seven out of the nine register countries had a minimum age of 15 or 16.

5. The clear majority of responding countries (62 per cent) collected information on educational attainment by means of a full enumeration. Sample data were collected by a further ten countries (21 per cent) three of which adopted a traditional census, six used a combined or rolling census methodology and one (the Netherlands) used data from registers. It is evident that in all the nine register-based countries there are sufficient administrative data to provide information on this topic.

Figure 1  
**Number of countries by minimum age for data collection on educational attainment and census methodology**



## B. Survey question: Non-core educational topics included or other educational topics

6. Most of the countries collected at least some of the non-core educational topics or other educational topics in the 2010 census. The most commonly included non-core educational topic was school attendance, collected in 34 countries (table 1).

**Table 1. Non-core educational topics by number of countries**

<i>Non-core educational topic</i>	<i>number of countries</i>
School attendance (CES Recommendations paragraph 348)	34
Literacy (CES Recommendations paragraph 353)	24
Field of study (CES Recommendations paragraph 342)	19
Educational qualifications (CES Recommendations paragraph 340)	16
Computer literacy (CES Recommendations paragraph 358)	9
Other educational topic(s) not included in the CES Recommendations	8
Length of school attendance (not in the CES Recommendations)	2
School enrolment/registration (not in the CES Recommendations)	0

7. The only countries that reported collecting other educational topic(s) not included in the CES Recommendations were Poland (Type of school, special education and trained occupation) and Albania (Completed years of school).

## C. Survey question: Additional information on this section of the questionnaire on educational characteristics

8. Turkey is the only country that provided additional information on this section, reporting that information on attendance to any pre-primary education (kindergarten, pre-school, day-care center) when they were aged between 3-6 ages was collected from the persons aged 6 and over.

## **II. Revisions to the Chapter on Educational Characteristics of the CES census recommendations for the 2020 round, proposed by UNESCO Institute for Statistics**

9 This section contains proposals by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for the chapter on educational characteristics in the CES Recommendations for the 2020 round of censuses. Doc. ECE/CES/GE.41/2013/14/Add.1 presents the revised draft text of the CES Recommendations reflecting the proposals presented in this section, and the comments of the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses presented in the next section III.

10. In the definition of education in the introduction of the chapter, the words “deliberate, systematic and organised” should be replaced with “institutionalised, intentional and planned”, reflecting the new definition in ISCED 2011. The following footnote with reference to the full text of ISCED 2011 should be added: “UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2012. International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 2011. Montreal: UIS. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>”

### **A. Educational attainment (core topic)**

11. Paragraph 333 should reflect ISCED 2011 terminology by adding the term “recognised qualifications” to the sentence.

12. In coding the ISCED levels, the 1997 levels of education should be replaced by the following ISCED 2011 levels:

- (a) ISCED level 1: Primary education.
- (b) ISCED level 2: Lower secondary education.
- (c) ISCED level 3: Upper secondary education.
- (d) ISCED level 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education.
- (e) ISCED level 5: Short-cycle tertiary education.
- (f) ISCED level 6: Bachelor’s or equivalent level.
- (g) ISCED level 7: Master’s or equivalent level.
- (h) ISCED level 8: Doctoral or equivalent level.

13. References to “ISCED level 0, pre-primary education” should be replaced with “ISCED level 0, less than primary education”, and the footnote should be removed. Paragraph 336 would be a good place to add the following background information regarding the definitional change of ISCED level 0: For the classification of educational attainment, ISCED level 0 has a different meaning in ISCED 2011 than for the classification of education programmes: it means not having successfully completed ISCED level 1. This includes individuals who have never attended an education programme, who have attended some early childhood education (defined as ISCED level 0 in the classification of education programmes), or who have attended some primary education but have not successfully completed ISCED level 1.

14. With regard to mapping between ISCED levels and national classifications, a reference should be made to the database of ISCED mappings maintained by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/ISCED>.

**B. Field of education (non-core topic)**

15. Throughout this section, the term “field of education and training” should replace “field of study” to reflect the terminology used in the ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013. Similarly, reference to “subject matter taught in an educational programme” should be replaced with “broad domain, branch or area of content covered by an education programme or qualification”.

16. Language could be made more gender neutral by replacing reference to “manpower” with “workers”.

17. Reference to the Eurostat manual on Fields of Education and Training should be replaced with the forthcoming ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013, published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

**C. School attendance (non-core topic)**

18. Reference to “Pre-primary education” should be replaced by “early childhood education”. In ISCED 2011, ISCED level 0 is called “early childhood education”, which includes “early childhood educational development” (for children 0-2 years) and “pre-primary education” (for children from 3 years to the start of primary education).

**D. Literacy (non-core topic)**

19. In the definition of literacy, the language could be made more gender neutral. The phrase “reading a newspaper” should be replaced with “reading, with understanding, a newspaper”. The sentence regarding requirement for a trained interviewer should be deleted. A description of literacy as a continuum of skills should be added, as recommended in the Belém Framework for Action, adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in December 2009<sup>1</sup>. The definition should be split into two paragraphs.

20. The recommendation of a literacy test should be strengthened. The sentence “Countries may consider the introduction of some form of literacy assessment questions based on advice from regional experts and UNESCO” can be removed from the paragraph. Cost implications of literacy testing may necessitate testing to be undertaken on a sample of the population.

**E. Computer literacy (non-core topic)**

21. No changes are proposed to the current text of this section.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIIL/confintea/pdf/News/confintea\\_vi\\_final\\_report\\_engl\\_online.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIIL/confintea/pdf/News/confintea_vi_final_report_engl_online.pdf)

### **III. Comments by the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses to the revisions proposed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to the chapter on educational characteristics of the CES Census Recommendations for the 2020 round**

22. The UNECE Steering Group on Censuses reviewed the revisions proposed by UIS to the chapter on educational characteristics of the CES Census Recommendations for the 2020 round, appreciated very much the UIS contribution and agreed in general with the revisions proposed.

23. The UNECE Steering Group on Censuses also reviewed some comments formulated by the Statistics Netherlands on the revisions proposed by UIS, and agreed to present these comments in the present section of the document, for consideration and discussion at the UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses in Geneva, 30 September to 3 October 2013.

#### **A. Educational attainment (core topic)**

24. The usefulness of the meaning of level 0 (paragraph 336 in the 2010 CES Recommendations) is doubtful as only attained level is relevant.

#### **B. Field of education (non-core topic)**

25. In general this section should make reference to the ISCED classification more clearly as the standard to use in data collection and coding of the field of education. It is therefore suggested to make the following adjustments:

(a) Paragraph 344. Please add that data collected on fields of education should be coded to the ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013 (the title of the classification may change, since the classification is still in draft and is scheduled for publication later in 2013).

(b) Paragraph 345 should clarify how the ISCED classification deals with inter-disciplinary programmes by adding the following paragraph 14 from the ISCED manual (the precise text of the paragraph needs to be verified after publication of the final version of the ISCED 2013): “Where there is insufficient information available to determine the relative shares of learning credits or intended learning time, the programme or qualification should be classified in the field listed first in its title. Where a main subject cannot be identified because the programme or qualification covers several detailed fields (and, even, narrow or broad fields) none of which dominates, the programme or qualification should be classified in an inter-disciplinary category”.

(c) Paragraph 345. It should be added that only for national purposes “countries may wish to identify specialization in different ways...”.

(d) Paragraph 346. The last sentence could be deleted when it is clarified in paragraph 345 that ISCED uses categories for inter-disciplinary programmes where none of the fields dominates.

(e) Paragraph 347. The first sentence should be rephrased in order to emphasize that ISCED is necessary for international comparison “countries that follow national nomenclature ... should adopt ... the most recent version of ISCED”.