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Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Coordination of international statistical work in the
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region:
Topics of in-depth reviews in 2024 and 2025**

Results of the consultation on topics for in-depth reviews in 2024–2025 and Conference of European Statisticians seminars

Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

The in-depth reviews carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Bureau and the seminars at the CES plenary sessions on topics of interest to Heads of national statistical offices are important vehicles ensuring the relevance of the work under CES.

In the past the topics for in-depth reviews and CES seminars were selected through separate processes. In October 2022, the Bureau agreed on a streamlined process with one consultation on the topics carried out in January each year, and establishing a better link between the in-depth reviews and CES seminars.

The document presents the outcome of the electronic consultation in January 2024 and the proposal on the topics for the next cycle of reviews and CES seminars agreed by the CES Bureau at its February 2024 meeting. The proposal takes into account the votes for the listed topics and new proposals, as well as offers by countries to contribute.

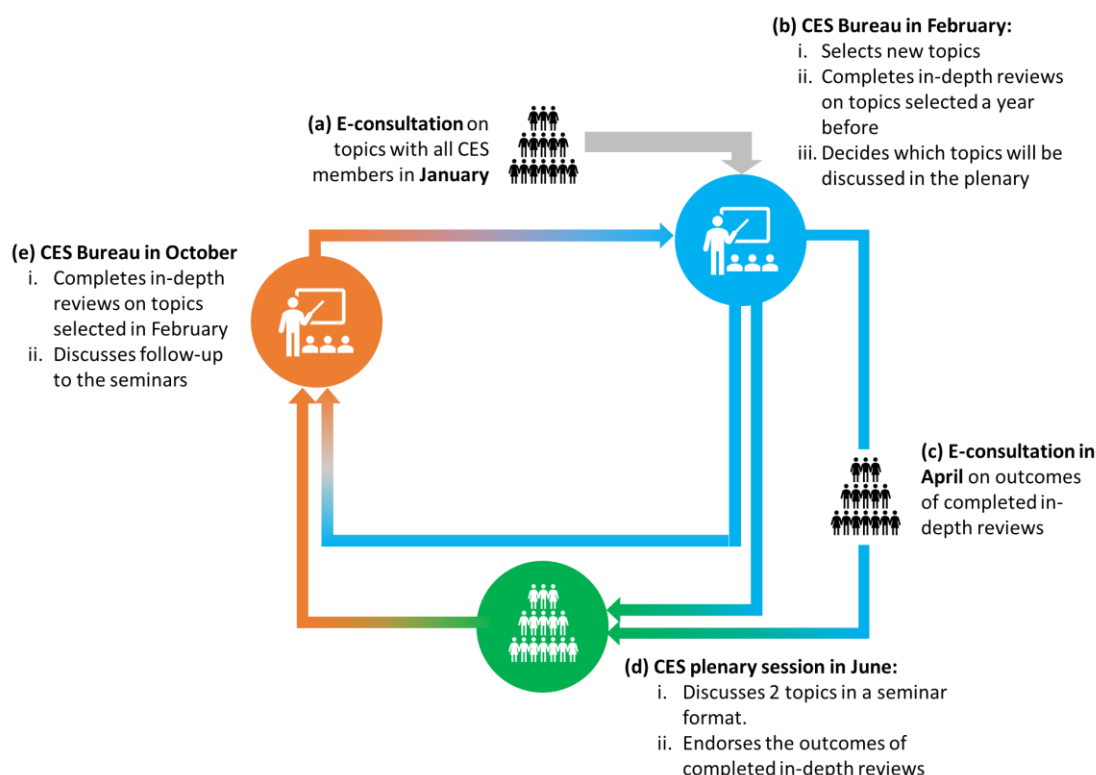
The Conference is invited to approve the proposal for the in-depth reviews and possible CES topics.



I. Background

1. The in-depth reviews carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Bureau and the seminars at the CES plenary sessions on topics of interest to Heads of national statistical offices (NSOs) are important vehicles ensuring the relevance of the work under CES. They aim to address the pertinent issues that statistical offices deal with today and to scan the horizon for the upcoming issues that they may need to deal with tomorrow.
2. The in-depth reviews aim to coordinate statistical activities in the region, identify gaps and address emerging issues. The topics covered are often novel or deal with new developments in established areas of work. The reviews are based on a paper prepared by some countries or organizations. The Bureau discusses the topic, aiming to identify concrete recommendations and actions to address the issues raised. The outcomes of the reviews are presented to the Conference for endorsement.
3. The CES plenary sessions usually include two seminars which discuss topical, strategic issues of official statistics that are of interest to the Heads of statistical offices. The seminars are organized by volunteering countries on topics selected through electronic voting among CES members. The seminars rely on papers prepared by countries and organizations and are a platform for sharing experiences and good practices, and discussing challenges and common solutions. The seminar session may be organized on a topic which was already reviewed in-depth or which was selected for the in-depth review in the next cycle.
4. In the past the topics for in-depth reviews and CES seminars were selected through separate processes. In October 2022, the Bureau agreed on a streamlined process with one consultation on the topics carried out in January each year and a link between the ongoing or completed in-depth reviews and the CES seminars.
5. The streamlined process runs as follows (see also Figure 1 below):
 - (a) In January, an electronic consultation on topics with all CES members is carried out. In that consultation, all CES countries and organizations “vote” on possible topics and express willingness to contribute to those topics. Countries are also encouraged to propose additional topics.
 - (b) In February, the CES Bureau reviews the outcome of the consultation with the broad CES membership, selects four topics for the next cycle of in-depth reviews (two for October the same year and two for February next year) and confirms two topics to be discussed at the CES plenary session in the same year. The Bureau also reviews two topics in-depth (selected in February the previous year).
 - (c) In April–May, the CES members are consulted on the completed in-depth reviews.
 - (d) In June, the Conference discusses the two topics selected by the Bureau in a seminar format and endorses the outcomes of all completed in-depth reviews.
 - (e) In October, the Bureau reviews two topics in depth (selected in February) and discusses follow-up to the CES seminars.
6. This paper presents the outcome of the consultation on the topics carried out in January 2024, in line with step (a) of the process described above. Section II lists countries who responded to the consultation. The results of the consultation are presented in Section III. The countries and organizations that volunteered to contribute are listed next to each topic. Section IV lists additional topics suggested by countries. Section V presents a proposal for the selection of topics agreed by the CES Bureau. The annex presents the explanatory notes to the topics of upcoming in-depth reviews.

Figure 1
The cycle of in-depth reviews and CES seminars



II. Outcome of the consultation on topics conducted in January 2024

7. The Secretariat sent out the electronic consultation on a list of possible topics for the CES in-depth reviews and/or seminars in the 2024–2025 cycle on 16 January 2024 (with the deadline for response 26 January). Forty-six countries and two international organizations replied: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

III. Results of the consultation

8. The list of topics, number of votes they received and offered contributions are presented in a table below.

Table 1

List of topics ordered by number of votes received and offered contributions

Topic	Votes	In-depth review contribution	CES seminar contribution
B. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM) in official statistics	45	10: Brazil, Canada (lead/co-lead), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands (not	11: Brazil, Canada (lead/co-lead), Germany (can organize first general part), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Norway

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>In-depth review contribution</i>	<i>CES seminar contribution</i>
		lead), Türkiye, United Kingdom, IMF	(paper), Türkiye, United Kingdom, IMF
D. Implementation of the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA) in the CES member countries	32	7: Belarus, Canada (not lead), Ireland, Mexico, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, IMF	8: Australia, Canada (not lead), Ireland, Lithuania, New Zealand, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, IMF
A. Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy	30	8: Albania, Belgium, Canada (not lead), Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Poland	8: Albania, Canada (not lead), Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Sweden
C. Halfway to 2030 – lessons learned from providing statistics for SDGs	26	7: Belarus, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	8: Belarus, Israel, Italy, Netherlands (presentation), Poland, Russian Federation, Switzerland (in 2025), Uzbekistan
F. New data sources for gender statistics	17	4: Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Mexico	3: Israel, Lithuania, IMF
H. Ageing-related statistics	16	4: Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, UNECE	3: Italy, Latvia, Slovakia
I. Statistics and data on cities – current practices	14	4: Israel, Netherlands (not lead), Poland, Türkiye	2: Israel, Italy
E. Is the way NSOs look at the economy threatening their objectivity and independence?	10		1: New Zealand
G. Social and solidarity economy	9		1: Italy

9. In addition, the following comments were made:

(a) Canada supported topic A. Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy for seminar or in-depth review, and topics B. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM) in official statistics and D. Implementation of the 2025 SNA in the CES member countries for a seminar;

(b) The Netherlands volunteered to organize a seminar session on topic D. Implementation of the 2025 SNA in the CES member countries;

(c) Hungary expressed no particular preference but would support the topics that received the most interest from other member countries;

(d) Kyrgyzstan inquired about availability of interpretation from English to Russian in order to ensure the participation of wide range statisticians in workshops, sessions, seminars;

(e) Latvia specified that for F. New data sources for gender statistics, they could contribute from administrative census Member State point of view and for H. Ageing-related statistics with experience on implementing adult non-formal education monitoring in Latvia;

(f) Poland noted that B. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM) in official statistics was very much in line with the 4-year ESSnet AIML4OS project, which would soon start in the European Union.

IV. Additional topics proposed by countries

10. The following new topics were proposed by countries:

(a) **Tools in the area of production of statistics based on statistical business register (SBR) data, IT technology** – proposed by Azerbaijan;

(b) **Implementation of the resolution concerning statistics on work relationships at the national level** – proposed by Azerbaijan;

(c) **Use of alternative data sources in statistics and assessment of their quality** – proposed by Belarus;

(d) **Ethical issues and new NSO roles** – main themes from the seminar on ethics in March – proposed by Finland;

(e) **Climate as a lens for official statistics** – how to maximize data and insights for the climate emergency? – proposed by Ireland. There is an urgent need for NSOs to address information requirements arising from the growing body of climate change and energy security policy and legislation, and to provide statistics to support policymakers as they work to take evidence-informed decisions in response to immediate and emerging climate-related challenges. There is a broad recognition that climate and energy is a cross-cutting issue, with data and insights needs beyond the traditional “environmental” considerations to also include economic, social, demographic and other impacts. Against that background, CES may wish to consider the following key questions:

(i) What are the key “value added” outputs that NSOs can provide to demonstrate the need for a climate perspective on social, economic and demographic statistics?

(ii) How to leverage microdata linking to introduce a climate lens across statistical outputs?

(iii) How to demonstrate leadership in climate data and insights in an often crowded policy and analytics space?

(f) **Respondent burden, citizen statistics and citizen generated data – How to effectively communicate with respondents in this digitization era?** We need to improve our response rate with a new contact policy management, better involving local institutions and civil society organizations, also providing respondents with smart devices as done in citizen statistics experiments. Smartphones can automate data collection and incorporate many important data-gathering functions – such as capturing images, audio and text – into a single tool that can “stamp” the date, time and geographic coordinates associated with an observation. Mobile applications for smartphones, tablets and other gadgets can turn just about anyone into a citizen scientist/co-creator of data – proposed by Italy;

(g) **Differential and intersectional approach in statistical production.** In 2015, the Member States of the United Nations, including Mexico, approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Countries pledged to eradicate poverty and hunger, reach inclusive economic growth, preserve the planet, achieve peace and justice, and “leave no one behind”. A commitment of this magnitude requires disaggregated data that makes it possible to identify the differentiated characteristics and effects on dissimilar population groups, sectors, or territories and strengthen decision-making to design, monitor, and evaluate public policies based on evidence. It implies some changes in the way statistics are produced. A global need for data and statistics capable of helping understand how given issues affect social groups and which inform in detail about national public policies may require cross-cutting and comprehensive efforts, approaches, and programmes, has arisen. However, there are many challenges statistical offices must face today and in the future such as conceptual, methodological, technical, and implementation tasks. Therefore, there is a need to develop a conceptual and analytical framework for comprehensive information with differential and intersectional approaches, including methodological revisions of the statistical process to achieve its adaptation and adoption – proposed by Mexico;

(h) **Methods to improve response rates to household surveys** – proposed by the United Kingdom;

- (i) **Migration statistics** – proposed by the United Kingdom;
- (j) **Mixed-mode surveys – current practices** – proposed by France for the 2025 list of topics.

V. Proposal agreed by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2024

A. Topics discussed at the Conference of European Statisticians 2024 plenary session

11. Two topics from the consultation have been included in the current CES plenary session:

(a) **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM) in official statistics and authoritative geospatial data** – 45 votes, 11 countries and organizations offering contributions: Brazil, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and IMF. The geospatial component has been added after the consultation with the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe) about the topics for the joint plenary session of CES and UN-GGIM: Europe (agenda item 5, organized by Canada and Germany);

(b) **Implementation of the 2025 System of National Accounts in the Conference of European Statisticians member countries** – 32 votes, 8 countries and organizations offering contributions: Australia, Canada, Ireland, Lithuania, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and IMF (agenda item 6, organized by Canada, the Netherlands, Eurostat, IMF and OECD).

12. The Conference usually discusses one of the in-depth review topics in more detail to collect input for further work. Based on the interest expressed in the last year’s consultation, “**Linking data across domains and sources**” was added as agenda item 3 of the plenary session.

13. **Data ethics** was also mentioned as an additional topic by one country (Finland). The 2023 plenary session asked the Bureau to discuss the follow-up to the last year’s seminar, taking into account the work undertaken under the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS), decide on further steps, and report back to the CES plenary session. This will be discussed as agenda item 8, including the main themes from the UNECE Workshop on Ethics which took place on 26–28 March 2024 in Geneva.

B. Topics to be reviewed in-depth by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau in October 2024 and February 2025

14. Two in-depth reviews on topics selected in February 2023 are already planned for October 2024:

(a) **Maintaining relevance through providing products meeting user needs** (leading country to be confirmed);

(b) **Administrative microdata for climate, energy and environment statistics** (led by Ireland).

15. Based on the results of the consultation, the following topics are proposed to be reviewed in-depth in February 2025:

(a) **Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy** (30 votes, 8 countries offering contributions: Albania, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Poland);

(b) **Halfway to 2030 – lessons learned from providing statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** (26 votes, 7 countries offering contributions: Belarus, Israel,

Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). The review will be led by Poland and will benefit from the input from the UNECE Steering Group on statistics for SDGs;

(c) **Ageing-related statistics** (16 votes, 4 countries/organizations offering contributions: Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Population Unit).

16. Although the topic “New data sources for gender statistics” received one more vote than “Ageing-related statistics”, it is proposed to select the latter in this cycle for a few reasons. First, it has been much longer since the previous review of this topic, which took place in 2012. Second, the Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated statistics is about to finalize its work this year. Third, the results of the review could inform the upcoming development of indicators for monitoring the progress in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy, which needs to be completed before 2026–2027. The UNECE Population Unit and UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing stand ready to contribute to the in-depth review. The organizational link between the Population Unit and Statistical Division offers a unique and valuable opportunity to strengthen collaboration between policymakers and statistical offices to improve the use of official statistics to inform policymaking in the field of ageing and societal adaptation to demographic change.

17. Depending on the review outcomes, a CES discussion on “Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy” or “Halfway to 2030 – lessons learned from providing statistics for SDGs” could be held in 2025 when the reviews are completed.

C. Topics to be considered in the next cycle

18. The topics that could not be accommodated in the current cycle and new topics proposed by the countries, will be put on the list of topics for the consultation in 2025 and presented to the CES Bureau for discussion in October 2024. Some of the newly proposed topics will be grouped together as per the suggestion of the CES Bureau.

D. Summary of the proposal

19. The following table summarizes the agreed proposal.

Table 2

Summary of the proposal agreed by the CES Bureau

Topic	CES 2024 discussion	In-depth reviews	
		Oct. 2024	Feb. 2025
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM) in official statistics and authoritative geospatial data	X		
Implementation of the 2025 SNA in the CES member countries	X		
Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy			X
Halfway to 2030 – lessons learned from providing statistics for SDGs			X
Ageing-related statistics			X
<i>Topics decided earlier (for information):</i>			

<i>Topic</i>	<i>CES 2024 discussion</i>	<i>In-depth reviews</i>	
		<i>Oct. 2024</i>	<i>Feb. 2025</i>
<i>Maintaining relevance through providing products meeting user needs</i>		X	
<i>Administrative microdata for climate, energy and environment statistics</i>		X	

Annex

Explanatory notes to the topics of upcoming in-depth reviews

I. Building social acceptability through improving statistical literacy

1. Establishing a relationship between NSOs and the general public is essential for ensuring social acceptability and trust, getting community engagement and improving the response rates. An important component of that is the ability of the general public to understand the work of NSOs and use statistical figures produced by NSOs.

2. The last activity that focused specifically on statistical literacy under the Conference was the 2012 Guide to Improving Statistical Literacy published under “Making Data Meaningful” series. The topic could be revisited in the context of gaining and maintaining social acceptability to, among others:

(a) Take stock of initiatives aiming to improve statistical literacy in recent years by NSOs, international organizations, non-profit organizations, academia etc., and identify the most effective approaches;

(b) Identify new challenges and trends, and explore new ways of addressing them;

(c) More broadly, explore ways in which NSOs can engage with the general public and increase awareness of their work to build social acceptability.

II. Halfway to 2030 – lessons learned from providing statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

3. 2023 marked a halfway point to the deadline set for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2023 United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development pointed out that achievement of SDGs is in peril and that the progress on most of SDGs is either moving much too slowly or has regressed below the 2015 baseline. Among other commitments, the Member States pledged to take action to strengthen efforts of international, national and local data systems to collect high quality, timely, relevant, disaggregated and reliable data on SDG progress, to intensify efforts to strengthen data and statistical capacities in developing countries, and committed to increasing the availability of SDG data and closing SDG data gaps at all levels, increasing financing for data and statistics, and enhancing capacity-building.

4. This halfway point would be a good moment to consider lessons learned from different dimensions of the SDG process: global, regional, national and local. Since 2020, the UNECE Statistical Division is preparing an annual report on progress with SDGs, using internationally available data and an advanced statistical methodology commonly used by all five United Nations regional commissions. The 2023 report showed that for the UNECE region data availability for monitoring SDGs is improving and the progress can be measured towards 115 of the 169 targets, which is an increase from 105 targets in 2022 assessment. Still, the region needs to intensify its investment in statistical capacity (targets 17.18, 17.19). Nearly a third of targets cannot be measured for the region due to insufficient data or other measurement challenges. For four goals (5, 11, 12, 13), progress can be assessed for half or fewer targets.

5. Some of the questions that could be discussed in the in-depth review are:

(a) What key actions could be taken to accelerate the progress in data availability and contribute to closing the SDG data gaps?

(b) The SDG reporting process puts NSOs in the centre of national reporting on global indicators. But for implementation and monitoring of policies, countries need more information: national indicators, statistics and data, often from outside of national statistical

system. What has been the role of NSOs in this aspect of the process and what are the lessons learned that can be applied in other areas, e.g. on working with other data providers?

(c) SDG process is a unique exercise for the global statistical system as it requires cooperation and coordination from all its members: custodian agencies responsible for the global SDG indicators, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), regional commissions. What this experience has shown about the global statistical system and existing mechanisms? What worked well? What has been difficult but is improving? What went wrong and is a long-term challenge? The in-depth review could be an opportunity to highlight the national perspectives on these issues.

(d) In the SDG process, there has been a lot of advocacy on the importance of reliable data for the success in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Has this translated to more resources for national statistical systems? What are the success stories? What more can be done in this area?

6. The CES Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs will be involved in the organization and will ensure avoiding potential overlap with the global workstreams of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

III. Ageing-related statistics

7. To successfully address population ageing and the needs of older persons through evidence-based policies, appropriate statistical information is crucial.

8. In 2012, CES conducted a first in-depth review on statistics related to population ageing and published a [detailed note](#) on key statistical activities and issues on the topic. Recognizing the increasing policy relevance of ageing, and noting these challenges, in 2013, CES established a Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics, which issued [Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics](#) to improve the availability, accessibility and comparability of statistical data in support of ageing-related policymaking in 2016.

9. Since 2018, the [Titchfield Group on Ageing-related Statistics and Age-disaggregated Data](#) has worked to address issues of conceptualization, methodology and instruments with the aim of contributing to and building on international standards and methods of the compilation of ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data. By the end of 2024, the group expects to complete its three work streams – (1) Data gap analysis for SDG implementation using policy priorities and indicators for ageing and older persons; (2) Conceptual and analytical framework for comprehensive information on older adults; and (3) Harmonization guidance for age and ageing-related data – and present recommendations for future work. At the same time, the group has identified three other work strands that need further development.

10. At that point, a CES in-depth review would be an excellent opportunity to take stock of developments in ageing-related data and age-disaggregation of statistics across the UNECE region to review developments since the first in-depth review 10 years ago.

11. Today, large data blind spots remain and there is a lack of age- and sex-disaggregated data in many countries that hinder evidence-based policymaking and effective monitoring of progress. However, there also exist opportunities to build on previous and ongoing efforts.

12. An in-depth review on ageing-related statistics could look at the following:

(a) Assessing if statistics today are fit for addressing ageing-related concerns which become more pressing in the UNECE region: blind spots, challenges and opportunities;

(b) Examining how national statistical offices have followed up on the 2016 Recommendations on ageing-related statistics, and the challenges to be met;

(c) Identifying priorities for future work.

13. The in-depth review will be prepared in collaboration with the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing to enhance understanding of the policy needs, and use of ageing-

related statistics and age-disaggregated data for evidence-based policymaking across the region.
