

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2017/2018 Bureau
Helsinki (Finland), 14-15 February 2018

Item III (a) of the Provisional
Agenda

**PROGRESS REPORT AND PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE WORK ON
POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES**

Note by the Steering Group on population and housing censuses

This note provides a progress report on the work carried out in 2016-2017 by the UNECE Steering Group on population and housing censuses. The note includes proposals for future work by the Steering Group on censuses beyond 2020 (annex I in this note). The Steering Group also proposes to establish a new Task Force on measuring the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses. The terms of reference for the Task Force are presented in document 6 Add.1. The Bureau reviewed the progress report and approved the two proposals for future work.

I. BACKGROUND

1. In February 2016, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) approved new terms of reference for the UNECE Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses, and established the Task Force on register-based and combined censuses. The Task Force worked through 2016 and 2017 and prepared *Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses*. The *Guidelines* have been submitted to the CES Bureau for review at its February 2018 meeting (document 17).
2. This note provides a summary of the work carried out in 2016-2017 by the Steering Group on population and housing censuses, and presents two proposals for future work.

II. WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE STEERING GROUP

3. In 2016 and 2017, the Steering Group acted as the organizing committee for the annual UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meetings on Censuses, which took place in Geneva on 28-30 September 2016 and on 4-6 October 2017.
4. The Steering Group supported the Secretariat in the organization of two regional workshops for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), which were held back-to-back to the Expert Meetings in September 2016 and October 2017. Selected members of the Steering Group facilitated the workshops.
5. The Steering Group also guided the work of the Task Force on register-based and combined censuses.

III. PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK ON CENSUSES

6. The 2017 UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses (Geneva, 4-6 October) identified two topics that require further methodological work under CES:

- a) Measurement of the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses;
- b) The future of censuses beyond 2020.

7. The meeting did not prioritize between these two topics, considering that topic *a* is a technical topic that is relevant in the short and medium term, and topic *b* is strategic, with a long-term view into the future. The meeting agreed to propose the two topics to the CES Bureau for consideration.

8. Topic *a*, 'Measurement of the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses', is proposed as the subject of a new Task Force to be established in 2018. Work on this topic would follow-up on the issues raised in the *Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses*.

9. Considering the strategic and conceptual nature of topic *b*, the Steering Group on population and housing censuses is well-placed to carry out the work on the future of censuses beyond 2020, and it would not be necessary to establish a new Task Force.

10. The proposal for work by the Steering Group on the future of censuses is presented in Annex I in the current document, and the draft terms of reference for the new Task Force in document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/FEB/6 Add.1.

ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NEW WORK BY THE STEERING GROUP ON CENSUSES ON FUTURE CENSUSES BEYOND 2020

I. BACKGROUND

1. Information available on the plans by UNECE countries for the 2020 round of censuses clearly shows that a high proportion of countries in the region are planning (or evaluating) the introduction of important methodological and technological innovations, and the adoption of alternative approaches based on the increased use of registers and administrative data. For many countries, the ultimate objective is to move to a fully register-based census in the 2020 round or later.
2. The UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses (Geneva, 4-6 October 2017) included a panel discussion on the future of censuses beyond 2020. The discussion started with a presentation on the work done on this subject at the EU level (doc. ECE/CES/GE.41/2017/21). In the discussion, consensus emerged that providing data on a decennial basis will no longer be acceptable in future, and that more frequent updates will be necessary. It was also observed that the discussion on the future of censuses should not focus solely on incremental improvements based on the past, but may require a paradigm shift.
3. The Expert Group proposed to undertake from 2018 work at UNECE on the future of censuses beyond 2020, building on the work done at the EU level. Considering the strategic and conceptual nature of the topic, the work could be carried out by the Steering Group on population and housing censuses.

II. MANDATE

4. The UNECE work on future censuses beyond 2020 is carried out by the UNECE Steering Group on population and housing censuses, which reports to the Conference of European Statisticians and its Bureau. The work is planned for two years until 2020.

III. OBJECTIVE

5. The objective of this activity is to prepare an in-depth analysis on the future of population and housing censuses after the 2020 round. This analysis will inform the recommendations for the 2030 round of censuses. The work should build on the work done by the existing Eurostat Task Force on Future Censuses, and take a broader regional perspective ensuring that its results are relevant to all UNECE countries.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

6. The work should start by taking stock and collecting all available material on the future of censuses beyond 2020, including the results of the work done at the EU level, the discussion organized at the 2017 UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting, national projects on future censuses and any other relevant material.

7. In developing the analysis, the following issues should be considered:

- a) The innovative methods being developed, multi-mode approaches using surveys, administrative data, and new sources;
- b) The increasing importance of geo-referenced information;
- c) Move from a decennial census to annual data collections;
- d) Use of ‘big data’, competition with ‘big data’ companies;
- e) The need to capture societal change: will concepts like ‘household’ and ‘usual residence’ still be relevant?
- f) The need for developing a strategy for the post 2020 censuses.

8. The planned output is an *Analysis on Future Censuses beyond 2020*, to be finalized by December 2019.

V. TIMETABLE

March-April 2018	Draft detailed work plan with activities timing and division of work
Mav-June 2018	Collect and review available material
Julv-August 2018	Prepare outline and first draft
September 2018	Present draft analysis at UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting
Oct 2018-Jun 2019	Revise draft
September 2019	Present revised analysis at UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting
Sep-Dec 2019	Finalize the analysis based on discussion at the Expert Meeting
December 2019	Submit final draft for review by CES Bureau in February 2020
February 2020	Review of draft analysis by CES Bureau
Feb-Mar 2020	Electronic consultation among all CES members
April 2020	Submit final draft to the CES plenary session (June 2020)

VI. METHODS OF WORK

9. The work will be carried out in English only, mainly by e-mail and telephone conferences. Face-to-face informal meetings for this activity could be organized in connection with the UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meetings on Censuses (September 2018 and 2019) or other events attended by a significant number of Steering Group members.

10. The UNECE Census Wiki platform can be used to share work material, develop documents and organize discussion forums.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

11. The work will be conducted by the members of the Steering Group willing to contribute to this activity.

12. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the work.

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