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Conference of European Statisticians

Group of Experts on Gender Statistics

Work Session on Gender Statistics

Vilnius, 1-3 June 2016

Report of the work session

I. Attendance

1. The UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics, co-organized with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Statistics Lithuania, was held on 1-3 June 2016 in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was attended by participants from Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan. The European Union was represented by EIGE and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Moldova, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Statistics Division, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISStat) were also represented, as were United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission invited by the Secretariat.

2. A number of participants were able to attend the Work Session thanks to financial support provided by the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Account.

II. Organization of the meeting

3. François Nault of Canada was elected as Chair of the meeting.
4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:

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- (a) Gender equality: sub-regional perspectives;
 - (b) Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals;
 - (c) Gender pay and pension gap;
 - (d) Measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship;
 - (e) Emerging issues in gender statistics;
 - (f) Work-life balance, time-use and decision-making within the household;
 - (g) Use of gender statistics in policymaking.
5. The discussion at the meeting was based on papers that are available on the UNECE website.¹

III. Recommendations for future work

6. The meeting recommended making efforts to strengthen the relationships between this group and other international organizations such as Eurostat and OECD, in order to formulate coherent actions in selected areas such as violence against women and valuing unpaid work.
7. The meeting recommended to pursue methodological work on measuring power and decision-making within the household. The following three activities are proposed for further action by the Steering Group:
- (a) Develop a business case to demonstrate the policy relevance of the topic;
 - (b) Conduct an inventory of the availability of existing indicators in different countries and organizations;
 - (c) Analyse the extent to which the identified indicators measure the gendered power and decision-making relationships in households and what kind of methodological work would be needed.
8. The meeting recommended that the next Work Session on Gender Statistics will be organized in September-November 2017
9. The following topics were suggested for discussion in the 2017 Work Session:
- (a) Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from the gender perspective;
 - (b) Implementation of SDG 5 ‘Gender equality’;
 - (c) Gender issues in vulnerable population groups;
 - (d) Use of gender statistics in policymaking;
 - (e) Gendered power and decision-making within the household;
 - (f) Asset ownership and entrepreneurship;
 - (g) Work-life balance and time use;
 - (h) Gender pay and pension gap;
 - (i) Social protection from the gender perspective;

¹ www.unece.org/stats/documents/2016.6.gender.html

- (j) Plans for examining gender issues using the census of the 2020 round;
- (k) Valuing unpaid work;
- (l) Violence against women;
- (m) Emerging issues in gender statistics.

10. It was agreed that for the next meeting, each session would be prepared by a designated organizer who would also be the discussant. The Secretariat will consult gender focal points in all members of the Conference of European Statisticians electronically on the topics for the 2017 Work Session, and will ask for volunteers to organize the sessions.

11. The meeting agreed that the papers for the next Work Session should highlight the following points:

- (a) the results that provide evidence for policymaking;
- (b) the way that these results can be communicated to policymakers;
- (c) the potential policy impact of the results.

12. The meeting emphasized that for the good quality of discussion at the next Work Session, the authors should ensure timely submission of their contributions.

IV. Adoption of the report of the meeting

13. The meeting adopted parts I-III of this report before adjourning. The annex, containing a summary of the discussions in the substantive sessions, was prepared by the Secretariat after the meeting.

Annex

Summary of the main issues discussed at the substantive sessions

I. Overall observations and conclusions

1. Key observations and conclusions which recurred throughout the work session, and which were noted in the closing comments, were as follows:

- The sustainable development agenda is creating a greater demand for sex-disaggregated data, gender-relevant data, harmonized data and metadata
- This renewed attention can be harnessed as a ‘new beginning’ for gender statistics
- Communication is at the heart of our work: it is as important to interpret gender statistics (or facilitate others in doing so) as to produce them.

2. Participants supported a proposed new requirement to give concrete examples of use of the work presented. Such an approach will aid in demonstrating whether and how gender statistics are influencing policy, how they are being taken up by users, and how they could be improved to better meet users’ needs. Further evidence of the usefulness of subjective measures will be needed.

3. A proposal was made for a more direct coordination between this group and other international forums working on gender statistics, including Eurostat and OECD. A unified and coherent strategy is required across Europe e.g. on new and emerging topics (valuing unpaid household work, gender pay gap, etc.).

4. It was noted that future work for this group and its vision for itself should involve not only thematic topic areas but also methods, e.g. how to influence decision-makers and methods of interacting with other groups.

5. Participants called for the secretariat to make good use of feedback given in the evaluation questionnaire for this meeting, to inform decisions about directions for future work. Participants were urged therefore to complete the questionnaire and to provide as much constructive feedback as possible.

6. Israel remarked that they have been using a presentation from Italy, given at a UNECE Gender Statistics Work Session six years ago, directly in their work, which demonstrates the value of the international experience-sharing.

II Gender equality: sub-regional perspectives

7. The session was based on papers presented by Finland (joint work with Denmark), Norway, the OECD Development Centre, CIS-Stat and Uzbekistan. Discussion was led by Serbia. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

8. Through the full range of territorial levels covered in the session – from international to sub-national – there were some common challenges. These include variation in definitions and classifications, sources, reference years, data quality, and collaboration among different entities. Both the Nordic and CIS projects achieved success through close communication with representatives of the countries involved. In Norway and Uzbekistan, coordination among different data providers is facilitated both by regulations and by

partnership-building. Participants noted the importance of partnerships, trust and shared expectations for successfully obtaining data.

9. No matter what the territorial level in question, it is valuable to seek feedback to evaluate the usefulness of outputs. The Nordic project received positive feedback from the politicians who initially requested the work. Norway's ministry for children and families uses it for construction of their own index. Lithuania noted that they undertook a similar project in the past with Baltic countries and may consider repeating it in the future.

10. It is important to use international standards to the greatest extent possible, to facilitate comparisons at all levels of analysis. All the papers presented demonstrated the importance of presenting metadata (among other reasons, to communicate deviations from standards).

11. The pros and cons of composite indices are well known. Within this context, the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) differs from thematically-related composite indices in its focus on attitudes and implementation rather than only on outcomes. Planned methodological changes might lead to the incorporation of new components such as workplace discrimination, unpaid care work and access to public space. The value of composite indices lies in their ability to present an easily-digestible message and to facilitate comparisons, but they are not the ideal tool for statistical offices to propose to policymakers to guide their decisions, because policies can usually target a specific domain, not an entire index. Policymakers need information that can help them understand where they can make a difference.

12. A common thread among all the papers in this session was the importance of communication. This includes communication at all stages: from the design of projects and outputs, to the collection and compilation of data, to dialogues with users.

III Gender and the Sustainable Development Goals

13. The session was based on papers presented by the United Nations Statistics Division, the Republic of Moldova and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Discussion was led by Ireland. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

14. The formulation of the SDG indicators relating to violence against women (VAW) makes population-based estimates the only way to measure them. Knowing incidence and prevalence of VAW is a necessary first step to formulating policies to combat it.

15. Some of the findings presented on VAW prompted discussion about the reasons for the observed trends and relationships. For example, why are levels of reported VAW higher in wealthier countries and in higher occupations? Possible answers were discussed, e.g. that awareness of VAW and of women's rights makes women more likely both to identify acts as harassment or violence, and to report them. Women in higher occupations are also more likely to be exposed to the risk of workplace harassment, which could be a partial explanation for their higher reported experience of it. Analysis of links with EIGE's gender equality index indeed found that greater gender equality is associated with higher awareness of and reported levels of VAW.

16. It is noteworthy that many data sources on VAW are produced by the private sector and the field is underdeveloped within official statistics.

17. The session demonstrated the important place of gender as a cross-cutting element of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Some key issues were identified for gender statistics, namely:

(a) Challenges arise from the sheer number of indicators explicitly or implicitly referring to gender or calling for sex disaggregation

(b) Additional challenges are inherent in the call for disaggregation by multiple dimensions. Statisticians need to communicate with politicians and other users about how and when it is done, and who is to make such decisions

(c) There are significant differences between previous or alternative indicator frameworks (e.g. for the Millennium Development Goals), the new SDG indicator framework, and the set of indicators actually or potentially available in any given country. Exercises in mapping between different indicator sets and frameworks will be useful for many stakeholders

(d) While the challenge may appear great, statistical offices need to remember that the global framework is only one level, and countries may adapt it and define their own national frameworks. The group may also have a role in defining a regional-level indicator framework

(e) Fulfilling the demands of this work will require not only new data but new and innovative uses of existing data. Lack of metadata will need to be addressed as a key priority

(f) The SDG indicator framework gives a renewed and strong mandate to the official statistics community and empowers gender statistics specialists in particular.

18. The session highlighted the need for links between the statistical and political agendas to ensure that global SDG monitoring moves forward in a desirable way. Similarly, discussions made clear that organizations (both within and beyond official statistics) need to work closely together, building strong 'data communities'. International joint work will be more effective than countries working alone.

19. The secretariat informed participants about developments regarding a CES road map towards developing official statistics for monitoring SDG implementation, and about a steering group which will guide the implementation of the road map. These initiatives will help countries to assess their readiness to report on SDG indicators; to develop a regional indicator framework; to identify capacity-building needs; and to develop strategies for dissemination and communication. In October 2016 the road map will be presented to the bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, after which the expected role of the current group in these activities should become clearer

IV. Information session

20. The session was based on two papers presented by UNECE. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

21. There will be further opportunities to support capacity building in countries under the next United Nations Development Account project. Countries are invited to signal to the Secretariat when they have a specific need for which they seek the assistance of UNECE. The secretariat detailed how follow-up takes place after the completion of projects and activities such as those described.

22. With reference to the activities on valuing unpaid household work, links with other organizations were discussed. Eurostat and OECD are both participants in the task force and are represented on the bureau of the CES, avoiding duplication already at the planning stage.

23. Discussion considered possible reasons for the relative lack of involvement in this topic in countries to date. There has been a feeling that the measurement challenges remain

too great, although the current work is bringing about changes in this perception. A change in terminology to define unpaid household labour as ‘work’ is leading to a shift in perspectives and in statistical priorities.

24. Mexico reported that a multi-agency seminar had taken place on the same topic, with respect to Latin America, on 30-31 May 2016 in Mexico.

V Measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship

25. The session was based on papers presented by Finland, Georgia, Israel and Mexico. Discussion was led by Belarus. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

26. A theme common to all the papers was that women encounter additional obstacles and discrimination in business and entrepreneurship: these can take the form of legal barriers, norms and expectations.

27. The papers from Georgia and Mexico illustrated that measuring entrepreneurship is very difficult, which is why it is still not a routine part of official statistics. The Mexican and Georgian delegates both stated that they would recommend the EDGE survey as a useful instrument for developing such statistics.

28. Specific aspects of the EDGE survey were discussed, including the incidence of conflicting answers about ownership being received from the two members of a couple. This is a major reason for attempting to interview respondents separately, as well as for distinguishing the different kinds of ownership (legal, economic, etc.). It was noted that methodological experiments to test the survey questions in various cultural contexts have revealed different understandings of the concept of ownership: e.g. in Uganda, respondents did not understand what was being asked in some cases. Men tended to underestimate women’s ownership but not vice versa. There was discussion of the added value of the EDGE project as compared to ownership data from other sources—principally, only survey questions such as these can distinguish the different kinds of ownership that go beyond land titles and legally documented ownership, and the survey covers a wide variety of asset types.

29. It was noted with interest that the study in Finland did not require new data collection, only use of administrative data, which reduces the cost of undertaking such studies when good administrative sources exist already. The findings were discussed in the context of other research, which has shown that companies with female CEOs and top managers may be more efficient.

30. The paper from Israel highlighted the fact that even when a legal framework affords the same rights to women and men, women may be under-represented in self-employment and entrepreneurship due to discrimination and/or a lack of incentives to entice them into this area in the face of competing expectations and responsibilities

VI Emerging issues in gender statistics

31. The session was based on a paper presented by the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission. Discussion was led by the United States of America. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

32. The use of numbered cards, with different numbers given each time so that respondents can answer potentially sensitive questions in front of family members without

them being aware of which answer is given, was noted as a good practice that could be more widely used.

33. Participants discussed the specific issues with non-response in relation to gender and sexual identity questions, and noted the need to explicitly offer an 'I prefer not to answer' option rather than risking offending or upsetting people who might then terminate the interview.

34. Question placement does appear to have an impact, especially on non-response. Sexual orientation and gender identity questions can be placed at the end of surveys so that even if they result in refusal or termination, they have not affected the majority of the data collection. In the example from the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission they are placed with other equality characteristics (ethnicity, disability etc.), but it was found that placing them next to religion questions can reduce response rates.

35. Interviewer training for collection of data on gender self-identification must be very explicit, whether for face to face or telephone interviewing, as it has been found that they often record male or female without asking the respondent.

36. There are pros and cons of giving examples to help people understand concepts and terminology related to gender identity and sexual orientation. Such examples may assist people to understand what is being asked, but they may also be leading.

37. Results from the UK exploratory studies suggest approximately 1-2 per cent self-identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, but there is also a non-response rate of two to three times this. There are no estimates yet of the proportion responding with a non-typical gender identity, because so far the work has been methodological analysis with a non-representative sample, for testing questions rather than producing estimates.

VII Work-life balance, time-use and decision-making within the household

38. The session was based on papers presented by Israel, Italy, Serbia and UNECE. Discussion was led by Kazakhstan. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

39. The production and responsible dissemination of statistics on gender inequalities, which reflect deep-seated stereotypes and attitudes, can have a role to play in challenging them.

40. Presenters were asked how information on these topics can be, or has been, used. In particular, how would new indicators on household decision-making add value compared to what is already available? Answering this question is a key component of the proposed work. Israel reported that some policy changes had been made in the light of findings from the Social Survey, e.g. it has been used to inform policies on equal opportunities. Serbia has been able to use the time-use survey for the time-use sub-domain of the EIGE index.

41. The advantages and disadvantages of introducing new modes of collection (such as an Android application) for Serbia's light time-use survey were discussed. One-time costs such as for laptops, fieldworker training and respondent training are considerable initially but in the end this outlay saves money.

42. The secretariat noted that the Serbian Light Time-Use Survey should be added to the UNECE repository of time-use survey case studies.

VIII Gender pay and pension gap

43. The session was based on papers presented by Italy and Lithuania. Discussion was led by Switzerland. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

44. Neither the Lithuanian nor Italian results have yet been published, so public or political reception of their findings is not yet known.

45. Participants discussed in depth the Swiss use of the term ‘unexplained’ in relation to the gender pay gap: having controlled for the potential measurable causal factors that we can think of, a gap still exists and is referred to as ‘unexplained’, but does this imply that the explanation is discrimination? If so, can we prove it and/or measure it? The Swiss delegate explained that previously the Swiss FSO did call it ‘discrimination’ but this was not well received, since there is no hard evidence that it really is discrimination; it might be due to unobserved factors that we have not yet identified and measured. The concept of equal pay for equal work requires controlling for many factors, and until we are sure that we have done this adequately, we cannot write off all the unexplained gap as discrimination. Some potentially important but as-yet unmeasured factors might be managerial experience and real job experience (factoring out periods spent out of the job e.g. on parental leave). The cost of measuring these relative to the potential value of the resulting statistics (the proportion of the ‘unexplained’ gap that they might explain) is deemed too high at present.

46. Nevertheless, the media will communicate the unexplained gap as discrimination, so it behoves official statisticians to be as careful as possible in controlling variables and in presenting and explaining all available information.

IX Use of gender statistics in policymaking

47. The session was based on papers presented by Belarus, Italy, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission and the European Institute for Gender Equality. Discussion was led by Mexico. The main points raised during the discussion that followed the presentations are summarized below.

48. The session gave concrete examples of policies being built on statistical evidence, such as the role of gender statistics in informing Belarus’ national plan on gender equality. While there were several examples of *formulating* policies based on statistics, there remains a gap in demonstrating how gender statistics are being used to *evaluate* policies. The EIGE database is one such example, however, as its intended role is for supporting monitoring and evaluation of policies.

49. The importance of engagement was noted. NSOs must engage with policymakers if they want to increase the relevance of what they do—they must find out what is needed and react to that need. Within the boundaries of impartiality and professional ethics, the role of informal relationships is important: they can facilitate efficient conveying of messages about what is needed and what is missing from statistics outputs. Formal institutionalisation of statistics-policy links is also necessary to ensure their relevance and use.

50. By working with other stakeholders, gender focal points in NSOs can encourage both data collection and use. For example, they can work with survey teams to ensure that gender aspects are adequately covered during survey design, or with officials from other government agencies to facilitate the use of published statistics in policymaking.