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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Conference of European Statisticians

#### **Fifty-eighth plenary session**

Paris, 8-10 June 2010

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Selection of topics for seminars on foundational issues of statistical systems and on emerging issues to take place during the 2011 Conference of European Statisticians' plenary session**

### **Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the 2011 Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

##### *Summary*

In May 2010, the UNECE secretariat conducted an electronic survey to consult with the members of the Conference on the possible topics for discussion at the 2011 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The list of topics sent to countries and international organizations for consultation is attached in Annex 1. The list of CES seminars held so far is provided in Annex 2.

Following a decision by the Conference in 2002, two seminar sessions are organized at the annual plenary sessions - one to deal with foundational issues of the statistical systems and the second one to deal with new emerging issues. The list of possible topics to be discussed at future plenary sessions has been regularly updated, based on the proposals from countries and recommendations by the Bureau.

Member countries and the international organizations were invited to select topics to be discussed, to indicate whether their office would be willing to organise a seminar/session or prepare a paper for a specific topic, and to recommend new topics.

The present note provides a summary of the replies received.

## I. Results of the survey: preferences

1. This year a record number of respondents – forty eight - sent their proposals. The following forty countries and eight international organizations replied to the survey: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, CIS-STAT, World Bank, OECD, ECB, Eurostat, UN ESCAP, UNIDO and WTO.

2. **The topics that received most votes are presented in the next paragraphs, by decreasing number of preferences.** The countries/organizations who offered to organize a seminar/session or to present a paper are listed under each topic. As a general comment, Canada expressed a preference for the seminars to be organized in a panel format.

### A. Most preferred topics

#### Topic (12) Organization of data collection and data sharing

3. This topic received the highest number of preferences: 18 votes (16 from countries and 2 from IOs).

4. Contributions offered on this topic:

Session organizer: Netherlands.

Papers: Canada, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, ECB.

5. **Comments made:**

- Belgium: Organization of data collection and data sharing is quite a challenge for the moment because retirement will diminish the human resources considerably, and the statistical office is in a process of change;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: This is an important topic to have necessary information on how to introduce new data collection methods. The statistical office uses traditional data collection methods and now has the opportunity to start with new methods in some statistical areas (for example, business statistics).
- Netherlands: Statistics Netherlands invests strongly in data collection, also reflected by the creation of a special data collection department. This department focuses on the development of mixed-mode surveys, prevention of mode-effects, use of registers, electronic data collection on internet by using surveys and robots.
- Italy proposes to include the important role of SDMX under the topic on organization of data collection and data sharing.

#### Topic (3) Measuring human capital

6. This topic received 13 votes (12 from countries and 1 from IOs).

7. Contributions offered on this topic:

Session organizer: New Zealand.

Papers: Belarus, Israel, United States (Bureau of Economic Analysis), OECD.

8. **Comments made:**

- Belarus is willing to prepare a report on “Health expenditures on investment in human capital and measuring health from a health status perspective”.
- Israel noted that they have started applying Jorgensen & Fraumeni Model.

**Topic (10) Short term economic indicators**

9. This topic received 13 votes (11 from countries and 2 from IOs).

10. There were no concrete contributions offered on this topic.

11. **Comments made:**

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Need more information and knowledge how to use data to produce short term indicators. Especially interested in service statistics because they are less developed in comparison with product statistics.
- UN ESCAP: Short term indicators are the most important topic which should be a follow-up of this year's topic: global crisis.
- Mexico: There is a special interest for us to advance on this issue.

**Topic (2) SDMX implementation: management challenges from the national perspective**

12. This topic received 12 votes (9 from countries and 3 from IOs).

13. Contributions offered on this topic:

Seminar organizer: UNECE.

Papers: Germany, Israel, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, ECB.

14. **Comments made:**

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Our priority is to develop a metadata system in the office. Some initial activities have been done in order to start this process. Need to create a detailed conceptual plan of the developing of these activities and to harmonize it among three statistical institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Important part of these activities are the tools and standards for meta-data exchange.
- Mexico: The SDMX project is relevant at the international level, but also for organizing information from INEGI because it helps to understand and document the statistical production processes, also is a tool that we use for the National System of Statistics and Geographic Information state units.
- United States: The topic could be a bit too technical. As the description of this topic notes, NSOs have been slow to adopt SDMX; thus, there may be limited interest among the heads of the national statistical offices in a seminar on this topic.
- Israel: We are in the midst of an international pilot.
- ECB: These standards are essential for an efficient and effective international exchange and sharing of data and metadata.

**Topic (6) Budget cuts and statistical programming**

15. This topic received 12 votes from countries.

Session organizer: Canada, Netherlands.

Papers: Spain, Netherlands (paper on highlighting the steps taken in this respect and presenting recommendations for efficiency gains and reprioritization)

Finland is ready to contribute.

16. **Comments made:**

- United States: The topic might be of general interest to the countries; however, the issues would need to be better articulated before proceeding to plan a seminar. It would be important to understand the relationship between this proposal and the 2007 seminar on “Increasing efficiency and productivity of statistical offices.”
- Greece: The selection of this topic was influenced by the recent financial crisis in Greece.

**B. Topics that received less support**

**Topic (5) Moving towards a process-based approach to statistical production**

17. This topic received 10 votes (9 from countries and 1 from IOs).

18. Contributions offered on this topic:

Session organizer: New Zealand.

Papers: Hungary, Switzerland.

19. **Comments made:**

- Hungary would like to contribute a paper on their national experience, dealing with the system of quality assurance, a unified system of documentation, standard methodological developments/support/process-coordinator role, and methodological aspects of standard IT developments
- Switzerland: Interested in efficiency gains stemming from a process-based approach to production. Discussions on inter-organisation cooperation for software, through processes, as well as consequences on human resources are also very relevant.
- United States: The topic may be more appropriate for discussion by information technology managers than by heads of NSOs.

**Topic (9) Government statistics**

20. This topic received 9 votes from countries.

21. Contributions offered on this topic:

Papers: Israel, Norway.

Finland is ready to contribute.

22. **Comments made:**

- Israel started using the Accountant General’s enterprise resource planning data.
- Greece: The support to this topic was influenced by the recent financial crisis in Greece.

- Mexico: Government Statistics are important. Initiatives to produce, integrate, preserve and disseminate statistical information on State institution's management and performance are welcome.

#### **Topic (7) Agriculture statistics**

23. This topic received 7 votes (6 from countries and 1 from IOs).

24. Contributions offered on this topic:

Seminar organizers: United States, Eurostat (co-organiser).

Session organizer: United States, Eurostat.

Papers: Germany, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

25. **Comments made:**

- United States: Based on consultations with the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) who are involved in the ongoing work to improve agriculture statistics at the global level, the staff at both institutions would be willing to help organize the seminar or a session. In October 2010 is the triennial International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (in Kampala, Uganda) that will largely focus on developing countries, and thus a CES seminar would be an excellent complement. Topics of particular interest are "Integration of agriculture statistics," or "Improving quality and cost-efficiency of agriculture statistics."

#### **Topic (1) Climate change and official statistics**

26. This topic received 6 votes (4 from countries and 2 from IOs).

27. Contributions offered on this topic:

Session organizer: United Kingdom, Eurostat.

Papers: Sweden, Eurostat.

28. **Comments made:**

- Belgium: Climate change and official statistics is quite a discussed issue in Belgium at the moment.

#### **Topic (4) Statistics on environment related housing**

29. This topic received 4 votes from countries.

30. There were no concrete contributions offered on this topic.

31. **Comments made:**

- Belgium: Statistics on environment related housing is a topical issue since a lot of subsidies exist (on different government levels) for households wanting to invest in solar energy, consume less energy, improve the isolation of their habitat. We already had a request to include a question in our Survey of Income and Living Conditions on use of all these subsidies given for household investment in energy saving, which we did in 2008 and will repeat in 2011.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Statistics on environment related housing covers environmental issues related to households which is new but could be relatively easy implemented.

**Topic (8) Environment statistics**

32. This topic received 4 votes from countries.
33. There were no concrete contributions offered on this topic.
34. **Comments made:**
  - Canada finds this topic interesting; however, the IAOS will hold its conference on environment statistics in October 2010.
  - United States: The topic seems potentially duplicative of an IAOS conference. Several of our CES colleagues have been involved in organizing sessions for this IAOS conference, and thus at a minimum we should not proceed to have a seminar on this topic without fully understanding how it would be different from the one about to take place.

**Topic (11) Crime statistics and perceived security of citizens**

35. This topic received 3 votes from countries.
36. Contributions offered on this topic:  
Papers: Chile, Denmark.
37. **Comments made:**
  - United States: The ECE's Task Force is still working on classification of crimes, so it may be premature for a seminar on this topic.

## **II. New topics proposed**

38. Members of the Conference were also invited to propose new topics. UNIDO proposed the following topic:

**Industrial statistics**

39. UN has adopted new recommendations for industrial statistics in 2008. Many countries are in a process of their implementation. Some countries, however, and especially CIS countries, may have faced some difficulties. In many of these countries even the recommendations of 1983 were never implemented. Besides, industrial surveys could be an important data source to meet the emerging demand of statistics of energy intensity, research and development and innovation. CES could be an important forum for discussion how industrial statistics is organized in many countries and what kind of statistics are compiled or are planned to compile.
40. The topic might cover:
  - (a) Annual industrial survey programmes;
  - (b) Data items covered by the annual industrial surveys;
  - (c) Data collection methods for industrial statistics: administrative sources, surveys;
  - (d) Web-based survey of industrial enterprises;
  - (e) Statistical indicators compiled from the industrial survey results;
  - (f) Demand supply balance of products through linking industry and trade data;

- (g) Use of industrial survey data in measurement of energy intensity;
- (h) Statistics of research and development and gross fixed capital formation in industry;
- (i) Statistics of innovation and innovative manufacturing products.

### **III. Conclusions**

41. The 50th Conference delegated to the Bureau of the Conference the organization of the CES seminars, including the selection of topics. The Bureau will discuss the results of the survey and the **proposal for the topics of the 2011 seminars will be presented to the Conference on 10 June 2010 under agenda item 8.**

## **Annex I**

The following list of possible topics for the seminar at the 2011 CES plenary session was circulated to countries and international organizations for consultation:

### **EMERGING ISSUES**

1. Climate change and official statistics
2. SDMX implementation: management challenges from the national perspective
3. Measuring human capital
4. Statistics on environment related housing
5. Moving towards a process-based approach to statistical production
6. Budget cuts and statistical programming

### **FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES**

7. Agriculture statistics
8. Environment statistics
9. Government statistics
10. Short term economic indicators
11. Crime statistics and perceived security of citizens
12. Organization of data collection and data sharing



## **Annex II**

### **CES seminars held since 2003**

- 2003 Statistical confidentiality and microdata  
Globalisation
  - 2004 National statistical systems  
Measuring process and volume of the service sector
  - 2005 Improved data reporting  
Sustainable development
  - 2006 Population and housing censuses  
Human resources and training
  - 2007 Increasing the efficiency and productivity of statistical offices  
Measuring capital – beyond the traditional measures
  - 2008 Strategic issues linked to the measurement of international transactions  
Measuring population movement and integration in a globalized world
  - 2009 Balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate  
to produce policy relevant data  
Strategic issues in business statistics
  - 2010 Spatial statistics  
Impact of global crises on statistical systems
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