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Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the CES Bureau

Outcome of the in-depth review of statistics related to population ageing

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of statistics related to population ageing, conducted by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in November 2012.

The in-depth review paper was prepared by the secretariat, and revised to incorporate the comments from the Conference of European Statisticians and its Bureau. The updated in-depth review paper is available as document ECE/CES/2013/9.

I. Introduction

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews each year selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. The review focuses on strategic issues and highlights concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.
2. At its February 2012 meeting, the CES Bureau selected statistics related to population ageing for an in-depth review and requested the secretariat to prepare a paper to provide the basis for the review.
3. The secretariat drafted the paper entitled “Statistics related to population ageing” that was first discussed at the CES plenary session in June 2012, updated based on the discussion there, and submitted to the Bureau in November 2012. Canada, the United States, Eurostat, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organization provided input to the paper concerning their statistical activities related to ageing. Following the November 2012 CES Bureau meeting, the review paper underwent further minor modification. The updated version is presented as document ECE/CES/2013/9.

II. Conclusions of the in-depth review paper

4. The paper outlined the policy challenges related to population ageing and the statistical issues related to its measurement, describing the relevant international statistical activities. It also proposed future action for the statistical community.
5. General issues and challenges with regard to future developments in statistics related to population ageing, for consideration by the international community, included the following:
 - (a) Production and dissemination of data by age, in particular the consistent use of age groups and the designing of survey samples to allow for sufficient number of observations in the age groups that are critical for measuring ageing-related issues, and the possibility of measuring age as expected years remaining, as an alternative to years elapsed;
 - (b) Dispersion of ageing-related statistics. This makes ageing-related data harder to explore, as statistics are often dispersed across different national government offices, or across publications concerning a wide range of topics;
 - (c) Data gaps in ageing-related statistics, for example in some labour market and poverty-related areas;
 - (d) Difficulties to grasp institutional population with conventional data collection;
 - (e) Need for subjective measures, for example to gain a full picture of quality of life, and following recent EU and OECD recommendations in this area;
 - (f) Need for longitudinal data to gain richer insight into certain dynamic and long term aspects of ageing, provided by adding panel components to existing surveys, or from longitudinal surveys such as the Generations and Gender Survey and the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe,

6. In response to these challenges, the paper recommended the creation of a joint task force of statisticians and policymakers to develop recommendations to statistical offices for improving and harmonising the collection and dissemination of ageing-related data.

III. Summary of the Bureau discussion

7. At its meeting in November 2012, the Bureau discussed the review paper as well as draft terms of reference for a task force on ageing-related statistics. In addition to specific proposals for improving the review paper and the terms of reference, the following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) The topic is of high policy relevance in many countries and the paper contains a lot of useful information that can be shared, including outside the region;

(b) Providing better access to micro-data and linking administrative and survey data have a great potential for improving ageing-related statistics. These issues need to be considered in future work on this topic;

(c) Communication and dissemination are the key to providing relevant information on ageing. A lot of data already exists but it needs to be made more useful and more easily available. Often these data are presented in individual research reports that are difficult to access on a consistent basis and to link with the data provided by national statistical offices;

(d) Better dissemination of ageing-related statistics to policymakers is an important issue that requires understanding of user needs. Involvement of policymakers in the task force would, therefore, be helpful.

8. As a follow-up to the Bureau meeting in November, a small group of interested countries and organizations developed the terms of reference for a task force on ageing-related statistics. The Bureau approved the terms of reference at its February 2013 meeting.

IV. Conclusion

9. The secretariat updated the in-depth review paper based on the discussion. It is presented in document ECE/CES/2013/9.

10. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics (document ECE/CES/BUR/2013/FEB/13)¹. The Task Force's objective is to improve the availability, accessibility and comparability of statistical data in support of ageing-related policymaking. The Task Force will submit a work plan to the 2013 October Bureau meeting.

11. The Task Force includes statisticians as well as government experts and academics who work on ageing-related indicators. It includes representatives of the following national statistical offices: United Kingdom (Chair), Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Tajikistan and United States. In addition, Eurostat; the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS countries; European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research; University of Southampton; and the European Centre of Gerontology are represented in the TF. Furthermore, the Ministry of

¹ At its meeting on 5-6 February 2013 in Luxembourg, the CES Bureau established the Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics and approved its terms of reference (available at: www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html).

Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection of Austria; the Federal Planning Bureau of Belgium; the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia; the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity of Portugal; the Institute for Social Protection of Serbia; the United States Department of Health and Human Services; and the Office of Management and Budget of the United States will take part in the TF.

V. Proposal for the Conference

12. The Conference is invited to endorse the outcome of the in-depth review of ageing related statistics, and take note of the updated in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/2013/9).
