

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

First meeting of the 2004/2005 Bureau
Washington, D.C., 18-19 October 2004

UPDATED LIST OF POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR FUTURE SEMINARS

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

1. In 2002 the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) decided that it would hold two seminar sessions annually to separately address foundational issues of statistical systems and new emerging issues. As a result, a list of potential topics was assembled in 2002. The original list was subsequently extended to reflect the results of the surveys conducted in 2003 and 2004 among the member countries of the CES and various international organizations concerning the potential topics of discussion for the CES plenary sessions. In addition to receiving feedback on the proposed topics, suggestions for new topics were received as well. The list below is submitted to the Bureau for consideration to decide which topics should be kept for future use in seminar sessions.

a) The relationship between statisticians and policy makers

13 Preferences 2003; 8 Preferences 2004

Comment:

- Suggested to be considered jointly with performance measures (below).

b) Issues related to the statistical environment

7 Preferences 2003; 10 Preferences 2004

(i) Public trust in statistics, protecting the privacy of respondents while respecting the right for information – principles of good practice; (ii) Supporting analysis and research by providing access to anonymous microdata, changes in institutional framework, etc.

c) Population and Housing Censuses in the future

9 Preferences 2004

Traditional method, based on registers, mixed - traditional with use of registers or other - or what?

d) Social statistics

6 Preferences 2003; 5 Preferences 2004

(i) Linking outcomes to the determinants of those outcomes; (ii) Reviving the system of social and demographic statistics.

e) Official and non-official statistics

Less than 3 Preferences 2003; 4 Preferences 2004

Comment:

- Suggested to include one "slot" devoted to the experience of international organizations (foundational issues)

f) The role of statistical offices in the development of e-government

4 Preferences 2003; 3 Preferences 2004

g) How to encourage increased statistical numeracy of children in the education system

4 Preferences 2003; 3 Preferences 2004
(i.e. a better understanding and knowledge of statistics).

h) Performance measures

Less than 3 Preferences 2003; 3 Preferences 2004
Political and statistical issues in their selection and publication.

Comment:

- Suggested to be considered jointly with the relationship between statisticians and policy makers (above).

i) Environmental statistics

Less than 3 Preferences 2003; 2 Preferences 2004
Issues in implementing the new handbook of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting

j) The revision of the SNA

3 Preferences 2004

k) Current thinking about measures of population and components of change, including the measurement of migration, identifying ethnic and other communities, and the future form and place of population censuses.

3 Preferences 2004

l) Strengthening ties between NSOs and academic institutions

2 Preferences 2004

m) Privacy issues

Less than 3 Preferences 2003; 0 Preferences 2004
(i) *How to keep legitimate concerns about privacy from preventing progress on building longitudinal files – what are the prerequisites of evidence-based social policy decisions;*
(ii) *How to maintain a productive relationship with Privacy Commissioners.*

n) Implementation of Fundamental Principles in Europe

1 Preference 2004

NEW PROPOSALS MADE DURING THE 2004 SURVEY

o) Techniques for improving the accuracy of population estimates, especially for small areas [Australia]

p) Analysis of confidential business microdata (foundational issue) [Canada]

The approaches statistical agencies now take to facilitate the use of household microdata in socio-economic research are inappropriate when it comes to business microdata. There are difficulties associated with (i) skewed firm size distributions making it impossible to mask business identities, (ii) the adverse consequences that can result if a few large, critical businesses lose confidence and stop responding to business surveys, (iii) the sensitivity of tax authorities vis-à-vis security and confidentiality of corporate tax data and (iv) potential current or future conflicts of interest for researchers. How can statistical agencies most effectively facilitate useful research with business microdata given these constraints?

q) Measurement of local government sector “infrastructure” capital (new emerging issue) [Canada]

There are growing concerns in some countries that the stock of this type of capital (local roads, bridges, sewers, water treatment facilities, and the like) is deteriorating as the responsible

governments have lacked funds to maintain and improve this capital over the past two decades or so. There is a need for more detailed statistics on stocks, flows and associated depreciation of local government infrastructure capital.

r) The measurement of public sector output (including that of hospitals, schools and public administration) (new emerging issue) [Canada]

The measurement of public sector output should be considered in a broad framework -- where the output of hospitals is health improvement, and that of schools is learning gain.

s) International comparability of self-report status in household surveys of health and disability (new emerging issue) [Canada]

There is work underway in WHO, the Washington City Group on Disability, the Joint Canada-US Health Survey, several EU projects, among others. It would be helpful to have some consensus on (a) just how much international comparability should be sought in different statistical domains (obvious for SNA, pop counts and mortality rates); generally accepted for educational attainment / years of schooling; but not so clear re health status – at least among OECD countries; (b) what are the main conceptual challenges to achieving needed comparability; (c) what are the most promising strands of work currently underway; and (d) what actions / priorities should the CES endorse or commit to.

t) How to encourage administrative bodies to create and maintain administrative registers [Armenia]

u) The Impact of the EU Enlargement on the Statistical Work of the ECE [US]

v) Social statistics and globalization: the role of NSOs [ILO]

w) Statistics of Consumer Prices [CIS-Stat]

Issues of practical implementation of the new international manual on consumer price index calculation (first results and problems).

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