

First meeting of the 2009/2010 Bureau
Washington, D.C., 15-16 October 2009

Item 3e of the Provisional
Agenda

**FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE
ON MEASURING VOLUNTEER WORK**

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. In 2005, UNECE and Eurostat sponsored a meeting of Heads of Social Statistics aimed at discussing ways to find greater comparability across the social statistics domain. As a result of that discussion, five countries agreed to participate in an exercise where the concept of volunteer activity would be used to evaluate the feasibility of achieving comparability. Participants for this working group included Canada (Chair), United States, Denmark, Australia and Italy, plus Eurostat as an observer.

2. Following that initiative, the creation of the Task Force on Measuring Volunteer Work was formally approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in October 2006. The overall objective was to enhance and promote comparability of social research across countries. To this end, the concept of volunteering would be used to demonstrate the practical and theoretical challenges in achieving comparable measurements. The Task Force was expected to:

(a) Gather intelligence and create an inventory of concepts and questions currently being used to measure volunteer activity;

(b) Evaluate and provide value added information as to the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches;

(c) Make recommendations for definitions, survey instruments and standard methods for measuring volunteering as part of official statistics;

(d) Analyze the lessons learned from this experiment and provide guidance on how to achieve greater harmonization of social science research across countries¹.

3. The Task Force reported on its progress to the CES Bureau in February 2008 and February 2009. The present final report of the Task Force is submitted to the CES Bureau for information.

¹ Text extracted from the Terms of Reference of the Task Force, available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2006/tf.12.e.pdf>

4. With the present report, the Task Force has achieved its objectives and completed the work.

II. WORK CONDUCTED BY THE TASK FORCE AND THE MAIN RESULTS

5. As a first step, in 2006 a network of focal points in countries that were members of the Task Force on Social Statistics was established. Canada coordinated an inventory of methods used to measure volunteering work. The results of this inventory were presented at the meeting of the International Association of Official Statistics in September 2006.
6. In early 2007, the Task Force started a partnership with other organizations including ILO and the Johns Hopkins University, which at that time had launched a project on the preparation of a Manual on Measuring Volunteer Work.
7. On 2-4 July 2007, the Task Force organized in Geneva - jointly with Johns Hopkins University - a Workshop for experts on volunteering from around the world. The discussions included the practical concerns related to the measurement of volunteer work, conceptualization and definition of volunteering, target measures of volunteering, survey platforms, instrument design and accuracy of measurement. The meeting helped to clarify some of the conceptual and methodological issues involved in measuring volunteer work and identified a number of recommendations on defining volunteer activities, measuring volunteering and questionnaire design. These recommendations were developed taking into account the experience of many countries who have been conducting volunteer surveys. The Workshop's final report and recommendations² are presented as document ECE/CES/BUR/2009/OCT/14/Add.1, and represent a major output of the work of the Task Force.
8. As of the second half of 2007, the work concentrated on the preparation of the ILO-Johns Hopkins manual, to which various members of the Task Force contributed. Canada, for instance, conducted focus group testing of the LFS module proposed by Johns Hopkins and provided feedback.
9. In December 2008, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work³ for labour force and other household surveys, developed with Johns Hopkins University. The contribution of the Task Force on Measurement of Volunteer Work and in particular the outcomes of the July 2007 workshop are recognised in the manual.

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² The document is also available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.07.labour.htm>

³ The draft manual is available at http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/ILO/ILO_ManualVolunteering_2008.pdf