

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

For decision

First Meeting of the 2010/2011 Bureau  
Geneva, 3-4 November 2010

Item 2(d) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW BY THE CES BUREAU  
IN 2011-2012**

**Note prepared by the secretariat**

1. The CES Bureau regularly undertakes in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas. These reviews enable the Bureau to promote the coordination of international statistical activities in the region, and to ensure that duplication of work is avoided and emerging issues are addressed. The aim of the discussion is to identify problems and propose follow-up actions at international level to address the issues identified by the review.
2. The Bureau has decided that about 4-5 topics should be reviewed each year. The criteria for selecting a topic or a group of topics for review are that:
  - (a) there are significant developments in the area;
  - (b) there are significant coordination issues;
  - (c) there is a lack of activities at the international level.
3. The topics for in-depth review are selected from the 56 statistical areas listed in the classification of statistical activities. The topics may be either single topics, or ad hoc groupings from among the 56 statistical areas in the classification. The Bureau also nominates a country/organization to prepare the issue paper that provides basis for the discussion. The Bureau members and other agencies actively involved in the area are invited to contribute short notes to the discussion.
4. Furthermore, the Bureau has decided that it will be useful to discuss the topics selected for in-depth review at a CES plenary session prior to the discussion at the Bureau meetings. This will allow to get input from the CES members. The approach has been successfully used during the last two CES plenary sessions (with the topics of statistical dissemination and communication; time-use surveys; and measuring information society and statistics on science, technology an innovation).
5. In order to organise the next in-depth reviews, **the Bureau is invited to**
  - (a) **select topics to be reviewed in-depth during 2011 and 2012;**

To facilitate the discussion, the secretariat has prepared a list of potential topics that could be reviewed, provided in Annex 1. The Bureau could select from this list, or propose any other topics. The current classification of statistical activities is provided in Annex 2 – the topics can be either single topics or combinations of

topics from the classification. The list of topics that were reviewed in-depth since 2005 is provided in Annex 3.

- (b) **nominate the countries or international organizations to prepare the issue papers to provide basis for the discussion;**
- (c) **decide which topics will be discussed at the CES plenary session prior to the review by the Bureau.**

**ANNEX 1**  
**POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS IN 2011-2012**  
**PROPOSED BY THE UNECE SECRETARIAT**

**List of topics**

**Topics to be reviewed in 2011** (2-3 topics should be selected from the list for 2011, the others can be selected for 2012 or remain on the list for later)

- 1) Leading, composite and sentiment indicators and official statistics
- 2) Banking, insurance and financial statistics
- 3) Survey methods
- 4) Process-oriented approach to statistical production
- 5) Political and other community activities, including voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, volunteering
- 6) Entrepreneurship statistics
- 7) Education statistics
- 8) Poverty statistics
- 9) Global manufacturing and international trade

**Topics to be reviewed in 2012**

- 1) Population Censuses
- 2) Climate change related statistics

**Explanatory notes**

**Topics to be reviewed in 2011**

1) Leading, composite and sentiment indicators and official statistics  
*(the topic deals with certain aspects of 4.5 Dissemination, and 5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles, role and organization of official statistics)*

Different indicator sets have been developed by countries and international organizations to meet the demand for evidence based policy making in a wide variety of areas. New initiatives to identify leading, composite or sentiment indicators are currently discussed internationally. Some countries are concerned about the possible compromise to statistical institutions' objectivity or reliability if they engage in producing leading, composite or sentiment indicators.

The growing demand for such indicators is evident; the question is how the national statistical offices react to this challenge? There is no international guidance on how to develop indicators and indicator sets, or how the national statistical offices should be involved. OECD and European Commission have published a "Handbook on constructing composite indicators", and OECD releases a set of composite leading indicators regularly. However, the recent crisis gave reason to reconsider the role and features of leading indicators. This is a cross-cutting issue that is not explicitly in the mandate of any international organization. At the same time, different countries and organizations have acquired practical experience with setting up indicator sets following the different global summits and to monitor important

policy strategies. Exchange of views and practical experiences in statistical offices would be helpful to guide countries with less experience and might lead to the development of a set of guidelines or recommendations. An overview of who has done what in this area and how the official statistical community could meet this challenge would be useful.

## 2) Banking, insurance and financial statistics (*DISA 2.4.6 Banking, insurance and financial statistics*)

This topic was proposed by the Bureau as a possible candidate for an in-depth review in February 2008 but was not selected for the previous round of reviews because it was considered too early to review this topic. An Interagency Group on Economic and Financial Statistics (IAG) was established at end-2008 to coordinate work on the improvement of economic and financial statistics among international agencies. However, this work should be linked to that of the national statistical offices and central banks.

The financial and economic crisis has highlighted the need for better and more timely statistics. While the financial crisis was not the result of a lack of proper economic and financial statistics, it exposed data gaps on key financial sector vulnerabilities relevant for financial stability analysis. Financial statistics is also challenged by the globalisation of the economies which make the compilation of very difficult. The measurement of FISIM and compliance to the 2008 SNA and other international standards are other major challenges in financial statistics.

## 3) Survey methods (*combination of DISA 4.3.3 Household surveys and 4.3.4 Business and agricultural surveys*).

Many countries have invested in improving survey methodology to increase efficiency and data quality, or reduce response burden. The *International Workshop on Business Data Collection Methodology* and the *International Workshop on Household Survey Non-response* deal with survey methodologies in business and social statistics, respectively. However, the work is rather specialized by statistical domain, which may hinder spreading of best practices. Hence, there may be a lack of broader international guidance on sampling, questionnaire design, interviewing techniques, web technologies and other survey tools etc.

Declining rates of survey participation, resource constraints and increasing user demand drive the need to investigate alternative approaches to data collection. The impact of different survey modes and the use of new technologies on data quality needs to be better understood. The need to sustain longitudinal studies brings up additional challenges. More discussion is required to find solutions for future survey-taking with less costs combined with improved data quality.

The opportunities offered by the continuously expanding access to the internet have to be considered, and data collection from the web is an issue of growing importance. Google, as example, has announced that it is using its database of web shopping to construct the “Google Price Index” that could one day “provide an alternative to official statistics”, and the amount of data on the web gives further perspectives to the development of “web-based” statistics. How may statistical offices deal with this challenge and opportunity?

4) Process-oriented approach to statistical production (related to DISA area 5.5 Management and development of technological resources, but not limited to that)

A number of national statistical offices increasingly consider a more process-oriented approach to statistical production. This is closely tied to the need to make statistical production more efficient and to create a single window type of contact to customers and respondents.

In many offices work remains in domain-specific “silos”, where the scope for cross-fertilisation of ideas may be rather limited. Some offices have moved towards a “functional” organization, where the functions (data collection, processing of data and dissemination) are grouped together. This may have led to some increases in efficiency, while on the other hand, there may be drawbacks in terms of e.g. lack of overview of the individual staff member of the production and its purpose. Some offices are interested in process orientation, and may have identified core processes and process owners with a responsibility to create common tools and more unified work procedures across the organization.

How to find an organizational structure that best supports statistics production taking into account the current demands? It would be valuable to share the experiences that countries have had so far with implementing different organizational structures; are there some common lessons learned that could be useful to share, and what are the perspectives and plans for the future? It would be useful to discuss what are different countries doing in this area and which international groups are dealing with different aspects of the change to a process-oriented approach.

5) Political and other community activities, including voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, charities, volunteering (DISA 1.10 Political and other community activities)

This area is increasing in importance, including in the context of good governance, social capital, etc. There is not much work in official statistics at the international level in this area. The CES Task Force on measuring volunteering has completed its work. ILO has prepared a draft Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work which was adopted by the ICLS. The ILO is also collecting data related to trade unions. The World Bank is undertaking work on measuring governance. A lot of work on measuring (good) governance is undertaken outside official statistics: in the research and academic area, and by agencies like the Economist Intelligence Unit, Gallup World Poll, etc. How much is official statistics involved in this area? How much should or can it be involved? The area is quite wide and it could merit a review by the Bureau to get an overview of what is being done, what the links are with official statistics, and whether there are gaps where international activities would be useful. A closely related topic “The role of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector (voluntary sector or non-profit sector)” was proposed by Walter Radermacher in February 2008 for an in-depth review.

6) Entrepreneurship statistics (DISA 3.3.7 Entrepreneurship)

This relatively new topic was only included in the classification of statistical activities last year. It crosses the traditional boundaries of economic and social statistics, combining data on business demography and performance with characteristics of individuals, households and societies. In the current economic climate, the role of entrepreneurs in stimulating economic growth is being given increasing attention, and the development of statistical methodology to

measure this phenomenon is a priority for several statistical organizations. Therefore, it seems to be an appropriate point for the Bureau to review what has been achieved so far, and to provide input on the future direction of this increasingly important and policy-relevant area of work.

#### 7) Education statistics (DISA 1.3 Education)

The topic is one of those few from social statistics that has never been reviewed in-depth by the Bureau. Comparability of data is a big problem in this area due to different education systems, different ages of compulsory schooling etc. Additional issues arise because of the changing scope of education statistics to cover alternative learning mechanisms (early childhood education, lifelong learning, home schooling, etc.), individual learning outcomes, quality of education, etc. Education statistics is increasingly important in relation to measuring human capital. International initiatives are undertaken to try to measure the outcome and impact of education rather than input. Achieving universal primary education is a Millennium Development Goal and the measurement of progress in this area becomes more important as we are nearing the target date of 2015 for the MDGs. The Bureau could consider whether the international activities in the UNECE region cover the emerging issues and whether any specific additional actions could be recommended.

#### 8) Poverty statistics (relates to DISA 1.5 Income and consumption, 1.6 Social protection, 3.3.1 Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues, 3.3.5 MDG indicators, to some extent also 4.3.3 Household surveys )

The overall aim of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is poverty reduction. Despite this, MDG-indicator 1.1 Proportion of population living on less than \$1 (PPP) per day, the indicator that most directly measures poverty, is conceptually among the most problematic ones and its geographical coverage is limited. There are also various conceptual and practical problems with national poverty lines and international comparability. At the national level, establishing the poverty line and consistency in the methodology across time are major issues. Documentation of published data is often unavailable or incomplete, which makes interpretation and comparison across countries and time difficult. Because local circumstances differ, a common basket for conversion into PPP terms cannot be used for all countries, leading to further issues with international comparability.

The Bureau could concentrate on an in-depth review of practices and recommendations regarding producing national and international comparable indicators of poverty, that is, population below national poverty line and international comparable poverty lines, and the metadata required to interpret and compare the poverty indicators across time and between countries. It can build upon the Bureau's review of statistics on income, living conditions and poverty carried out in 2007. Poverty statistics may also benefit from the update of the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics to reflect the recent international developments and good practices in household income measurement.

#### 9) Global manufacturing and international trade

*(part of DISA 3.3.4 Globalisation, 2.6 International trade and balance of payments)*

Globalisation statistics were reviewed by the CES in 2006 and as a result the CES Bureau established the Group of Experts on the Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts

(GGNA). In the course of the work the GGNA has identified a number of problems, which countries have just started to tackle and where follow-up activities and further guidance are needed. One of the main outstanding issues is *global manufacturing*. The new international standards, 2008 SNA and particularly BPM6 provide some guidance on recording these activities. But the work of the GGNA showed that there is much room for interpretation and as a result there are some inconsistencies in recording across countries and between individual cases of outsourcing by global manufacturers.

The issue is related to international trade and product and commodity statistics. International trade and balance of payments statistics have not been reviewed in-depth by the Bureau so far. A review may be timely in the context of the work on globalization, decreasing trade barriers and increasing intra-community trade, e-commerce, etc.

### **Topics to be reviewed in 2012:**

#### 1) Population Censuses

*(part of DISA 4.3.1 Population and housing censuses; registers of population, dwellings and buildings)*

The 2010 population census round is in full swing in the UNECE region with nearly all countries conducting censuses at this time. There are significant moves away from the "Traditional" census collection methodology with countries adopting a number of different models for data collection. While there is significant international cooperation with respect to population censuses, and countries follow the guidelines as far as they are able, an independent high level review of the various changes and the implications for census results appears worthwhile. Also there are significant country differences regarding data dissemination. In the case of EU countries the main dissemination tool will be a new "Census Hub" currently being developed. UNSD traditionally collects census data from all countries of the world with a dedicated questionnaire. In general, it would be worthwhile reviewing what is happening with census output.

#### 2) Climate change related statistics

*(currently there is no number allocated for this statistical area in DISA)*

Climate change is an important global issue with social, economic and environmental impacts. The statistical community is increasingly recognizing the need to develop better statistics and to address the growing demand for authoritative, robust, timely and comparable data on climate change. Further work, including training and capacity building, is required to strengthen the capability of countries to produce high quality statistics for climate change analysis. Furthermore, to improve climate change related statistics at European and global level, the statistical institutes need to identify common concerns and demands to be addressed at the international level. Many international organizations are dealing with climate change related issues from different viewpoints, and several international initiatives are undertaken in this area. We can expect that this work will have advanced by 2012. The UNECE is carrying out a the survey on involvement of NSOs in climate change related work and will have the results in 2011. Therefore, it might be a good time within two years to review what is happening at international level in this area.

## ANNEX 2

### CLASSIFICATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

#### Domain 1: Demographic and social statistics

- 1.1 Population and migration
- 1.2 Labour
- 1.3 Education
- 1.4 Health
- 1.5 Income and consumption
- 1.6 Social protection
- 1.7 Human settlements and housing
- 1.8 Justice and crime
- 1.9 Culture
- 1.10 Political and other community activities
- 1.11 Time-use

#### Domain 2: Economic statistics

- 2.1 Macroeconomic statistics
- 2.2 Economic accounts
- 2.3 Business statistics
- 2.4 Sectoral statistics
  - 2.4.1 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries
  - 2.4.2 Energy
  - 2.4.3 Mining, manufacturing, construction
  - 2.4.4 Transport
  - 2.4.5 Tourism
  - 2.4.6 Banking, insurance, financial statistics
- 2.5 Government finance, fiscal and public sector statistics
- 2.6 International trade and balance of payments
- 2.7 Prices
- 2.8 Labour cost
- 2.9 Science, technology (and innovation)

#### Domain 3: Environment and multi-domain statistics

- 3.1 Environment
- 3.2 Regional and small area statistics
- 3.3 Multi-domain statistics and indicators
  - 3.3.1 Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues
  - 3.3.2 Gender and special population groups
  - 3.3.3 Information society
  - 3.3.4 Globalisation
  - 3.3.5 Indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals
  - 3.3.6 Sustainable development
  - (3.3.7 Entrepreneurship)
- 3.4 Yearbooks and similar compendia



**Domain 4: Methodology of data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis**

- 4.1 Metadata
- 4.2 Classifications
- 4.3 Data sources
  - 4.3.1 Population and housing censuses; registers of population, dwellings and buildings
  - 4.3.2 Business and agricultural censuses and registers
  - 4.3.3 Household surveys
  - 4.3.4 Business and agricultural surveys
  - 4.3.5 Other administrative sources
- 4.4 Data editing and data linkage
- 4.5 Dissemination, data warehousing
- 4.6 Statistical confidentiality and disclosure protection
- 4.7 Data analysis

**Domain 5: Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics**

- 5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles; role and organisation of official statistics
- 5.2 Statistical programmes; coordination within statistical systems
- 5.3 Quality frameworks and measurement of performance of statistical systems and offices
- 5.4 Management and development of human resources
- 5.5 Management and development of technological resources (including standards for electronic data exchange and data sharing)
- 5.6 Coordination of international statistical work
- 5.7 Technical cooperation and capacity building

### ANNEX 3

#### TOPICS REVIEWED IN-DEPTH SINCE FEBRUARY 2005

- Technical cooperation (February 2005, paper by Eurostat)
- Migration statistics (February 2005, paper by United States)
- Income and consumption (February 2005, paper by Canada)
- Labour statistics (February 2005, paper by Italy and ILO)
- Transport statistics (February 2005, paper by Denmark)
- Quality frameworks and the link with institutional frameworks and principles (February 2006, paper by Sweden, in cooperation with Eurostat and IMF)
- Statistics on Globalisation (February 2006, paper by Canada and United Kingdom)
- Justice and crime statistics, including the safety concept (February 2006, papers by Italy and the Netherlands)
- Health statistics (February 2006, papers by United States and OECD)
- SDMX initiative (February 2007, paper by SDMX sponsors)
- Population statistics (February 2007, paper by UNECE)
- Business statistics (February 2007, notes by IMF, Finland, UNSD, UNECE, Eurostat, Canada)
- Income, living conditions and poverty (October 2007, paper by OECD)
- Gender statistics (October 2007, paper by UNECE)
- Culture statistics (February 2008, paper by Finland)
- Environment statistics (February 2008, paper by Eurostat)
- Agricultural statistics, including forestry and fisheries statistics (October 2008, paper by Eurostat, in cooperation with United States and Brazil)
- Measurement of labour cost (October 2008, paper by OECD)
- Housing statistics (February 2009, paper by Poland)
- Statistical dissemination, communication and publications (October 2009, paper by the CES Steering Group on Statistical Dissemination and Communication)
- Government finance, fiscal and public sector statistics (October 2009, paper by IMF)
- The use of secondary and mixed sources for official statistics (June 2010, paper by UNECE)
- Time-use surveys (November 2010, paper by Germany)
- Measuring the information society and statistics on science, technology and innovation (November 2010, paper by Australia)

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