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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of the 2015/2016 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 21-22 October 2015

For decision

Item 2 (c) of the Provisional Agenda

SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS IN 2015-2016

Note by the Secretariat

The Bureau selected topics D, F, G and H to be reviewed in-depth in 2016. The Secretariat will identify lead authors for the in-depth reviews.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly undertakes in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas to coordinate statistical activities in the region, avoid duplication of work and address emerging issues. The aim is to identify issues and challenges and propose possible follow-up actions to address them.

2. Guidelines for in-depth reviews are provided in ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/5/Rev.[1] and a template for papers in ECE/CES/BUR/2014/JAN/7.

3. In order to facilitate the discussion, the Secretariat has prepared a list of potential topics that could be reviewed. The topics are divided into three groups: subject-matter issues, issues related to the organization and management of statistical production, and issues related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Possible in-depth reviews on issues related to SDGs would provide input to the road map on the development of official statistics for the monitoring of SDGs in the UNECE region. The timing of these reviews should be aligned with the process of developing the road map.

4. The Bureau may select in-depth review topics from the annexed list, or propose any other topic. The topics are often linked to the statistical areas listed in the Classification of Statistical Activities (www.unece.org/disa), but not limited to those topics. Annex 1 provides a list of topics that have been reviewed since 2010. Annex 2 provides the Classification of Statistical Activities.

5. The Bureau may also decide to revisit the topics that have been reviewed earlier where actions were put on hold, such as housing statistics (reviewed in 2009), education statistics (reviewed in 2012), etc.

[1] www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2012/05Rev-Organization_of_in-depth_reviews.pdf

6. Furthermore, the Bureau is invited to select one of the in-depth review topics for discussion at the CES 2016 plenary session to get input from all CES members. This can be one of the topics already reviewed by the Bureau, or one of those which the Bureau will review in the future.

II. LIST OF POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

Subject-matter issues

A. Streamlining work on energy statistics
B. Classification of wastes and wastes management
C. Measuring social exclusion
D. Measuring governance

Issues related to management and organization of statistical production

E. Definition of national statistical systems
F. Exchange of economic data and data sharing
G. Data integration

Issues related to SDGs

H. Main data gaps in UNECE countries considering the upcoming SDG monitoring
I. Review of the global SDG indicators' relevance for UNECE region
J. Issues related to data disaggregation
K. Capacity building for monitoring SDGs
L. Harnessing modernization of statistical production for reporting on SDGs

III. EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE TOPICS

SUBJECT-MATTER ISSUES

A. Streamlining work on energy statistics (DISA 2.4.2 Energy, 3.1 Environment)

9. On the occasion of the Expert Forum on climate change, 2-3 September 2015, the International Energy Agency (IEA) approached UNECE for closer collaboration in energy statistics. International work on energy statistics is led by IEA with the involvement of other organizations, such as the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and Eurostat. IEA emphasized the need for a review of the various policy initiatives that require energy data and a mapping of the national and international work carried out in this area.

10. The review would help refocus national and international work to maximize the value of energy statistics. Energy statistics are a central data source for various policy frameworks as governments seek to reduce wasteful energy consumption, cut greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen energy efficiency and security. For instance, the three headline targets of the EU framework for energy and climate policies up to 2020 focus on energy: reduction in GHG emissions, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the reporting of timely and reliable energy statistics complemented with new information required by energy policy makers.

11. IEA notes that closer international collaboration is needed to harmonize key definitions, and that we should share efforts to reduce the burden of developing energy statistics in each country. The review should explore areas where efficiencies or synergies could be realized in the work of various ministries, environmental agencies, statistical offices etc. For example, energy statistics are key for improving coherence between emission inventories and official statistics as more than 80 % of total greenhouse gas emissions in the EU are caused by energy production and use. Furthermore, the Emissions Trading Scheme data would help improve energy end-use data, but statistical offices have difficulties accessing these data.

12. The in-depth review would provide a review or a mapping of:

a) The key policy and data initiatives that require energy statistics;

b) Current international activities to develop energy statistics;

c) Challenges in national collaboration among agencies producing data on energy and related data on environment;

d) Data gaps on one hand, and possible duplication of effort on the other;

e) Possible actions to improve national and international work to maximize the value of energy statistics.

B. Classification of wastes and wastes management (DISA 3.1 Environment)

13. There is no standard international framework of solid wastes and wastes management. Wastes are classified according to different overlapping criteria (by source, type of collection (municipal, non-municipal), characteristics (hazardous, non-hazardous), management, etc.). Different subject areas sometimes use different definitions of waste reflecting its different aspects (as a valuable economic resource through recycling, or as something to get rid of). The Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics (FDES) lists the subcomponents related to waste statistics but does not provide a coherent structure to organize these data. This is a problem in the implementation of waste statistics, waste accounts, application of waste-related indicators and the international comparability of waste-related data.

14. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

a) Stocktaking of classifications used in waste statistics;

b) Identifying waste-related information needs, by also looking at the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda;

c) Identifying the role of NSOs in the monitoring of waste management;

d) Proposing follow-up activities towards harmonizing and improving statistics and indicators on solid waste.

C. Measuring social exclusion (related to DISA 1.6 on social protection, 3.3.1 on living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues and 3.3.2 gender and special population groups)

15. The tight economic situation of many European countries is leading to increasing social exclusion – a division between insiders and outsiders – and policy makers need better tools to effectively address the serious problems arising from this divide. Policy discourse is extending beyond poverty and deprivation to address the processes by which people and groups experience exclusion. The concept of social exclusion is not only linked to poverty and deprivation, but also to accumulation of disadvantage with respect to material resources, social and economic participation and personal growth.

16. As a multi-dimensional concept, social exclusion (or inclusion) cannot easily be measured through existing statistics which have not been designed for this purpose. Therefore, countries have developed various indicators to analyze the different aspects of social exclusion. Eurostat provides indicators to monitor the EU goal to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 20 million by 2020 compared with 2008. According to these indicators, almost every fourth person in the EU was still at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2013.

17. Income remains the most widely used indicator to measure social exclusion although it does not measure the exclusion directly. There appears to be relatively few measures of access to institutions and better data are needed to measure functional literacy, numeracy and human rights issues which have a direct relationship with social exclusion. More data are needed to examine the determinants of exclusion, powerlessness and voicelessness, economic vulnerability and diminished life experiences and limited life prospects. Often the available statistics are not adequately differentiated across population groups and their characteristics.

18. The aim of this in-depth review would be to take stock of:

a) Existing concepts, definitions and measurement frameworks developed to capture social exclusion (or inclusion);

b) Current involvement of national statistical offices in producing and disseminating data relevant to social exclusion (or inclusion);

c) Important data gaps relating to social exclusion that could be filled by official statistics;

d) The extent to which national statistical offices should develop better services for the monitoring of the various aspects of social exclusion.

D. Measuring governance (related to DISA 1.10 Political and other community activities)

19. Official statistics are increasingly seen as the tool to empower people and hold policy makers accountable for their decisions. At the same time, there is no global agreement on the concept of governance or how it should be measured in a harmonized way across countries. The relevance of good governance is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal no. 16 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

20. The governance topic is also linked to social capital as identified in the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*. The *CES Recommendations* recognized that proper measures for social capital are lacking and this area requires further work.

21. In March 2015, United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) set up a Praia City Group on governance, peace and security statistics to develop international recommendations on governance statistics. As this will require further work, countries would benefit from a review of the current state of affairs and a consideration of the possible way forward in the UNECE region.

22. The in-depth review would consider the following issues:

a) Current role of national statistical offices in the UNECE region in compiling statistics that could be used to measure governance;
b) Explore good practices of statistical offices in informing the public on governance;
c) What are the elements of good governance that could be measured by official statisticians? These could include issues such as institutional capacity of the government; transparency and right to information; accountability and reduced corruption; quality and impact of public goods and services; participation in decision making and public services;
d) What are the areas of governance that are difficult to measure and would require development of specific guidance? These could include issues such as measuring the effectiveness of public institutions or the performance of the government and its output/outcome.

ISSUES RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION

E. Definition of national statistical systems (DISA 5.1 Institutional frameworks and principles; role and organization of official statistics)

23. The need to define more explicitly the national statistical systems and designate clearly the producers of official statistics has come across from several initiatives. The boarders of statistical systems were considered in the drafting of a Generic Statistical Law, under a United Nations Development Account project for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The peer reviews carried out at the European Statistical System in 2013-2015 made several recommendations on the need to establish clearer definition of the national statistical system and official statistics.

24. Furthermore, the national statistical systems should cooperate with producers outside official statistics in the context of monitoring SDGs. This highlights again the need to identify which producers are outside, and what are the legal, organizational and other issues arising in this cooperation.

25. The Generic Statistical Law defines the national statistical system as consisting of producers of official statistics within a country and comprising the national statistical office, which is the leading agency of the national statistical system, and other producers of official statistics, which consist of organizational entities of national authorities that develop, produce and disseminate official statistics in accordance with the Statistical Law. In addition, other producers of official statistics shall be listed in the annual statistical programme.

26. The in-depth review would consider the following issues:
a) What main types of organizing national statistical systems can be identified in UNECE countries? What are their features, benefits and challenges?
b) What does the national statistical system typically entail? Is there a unified definition that exists across countries?
c) What are the criteria for including statistical producers in the national statistical system? What are the reasons for excluding some producers or statistics?
d) What are the benefits of having an explicitly defined national statistical system? Could this enable efficiencies through closer collaboration and better data sharing?

F. Exchange of economic data and data sharing (DISA 4.6 Statistical confidentiality; 5.5 Management and development of technological resources (including standards for electronic data exchange and data sharing))

27. The Meeting of Group of Experts on National Accounts devoted to measuring global production, 7-9 July 2015, identified work on new sources and methods to compile economic statistics as main priority for further work. Issues related to global production may oblige NSOs to combine efforts in providing comprehensive view on multinational enterprises and global production and international trade more generally. The meeting asked international organizations to consider ways to facilitate data sharing. The participants expressed strong support for moving forward with data sharing, but recognized that this is a very challenging issue due to legal and confidentiality constrains. Linked with this is the issue of better integration of economic data from different data sources such as statistical business registers, business surveys, economic censuses, administrative sources, nationally and internationally. This would facilitate both introducing efficiencies in statistical production and improving the coherence and relevance of statistics. More integrated statistical information systems would help address the challenge of producing statistics and carrying out research in the increasingly globalized world.

28. Countries have developed some cooperation mechanisms for data exchange and confrontation among producers of official statistics. Mirror-data exercises between countries have also provided promising results and led to significant improvements in data quality. While current experience is still limited, it points out that progress in this area is achievable. Therefore, the current experience should be reviewed to encourage development of similar and new practices of data sharing and integration nationally and internationally.

29. The aim of this in-depth review would be to review the different initiatives to exchange economic statistical data nationally and internationally and consider the results received and the alternative approaches used. Specific topics to be considered could include:

a) Review of cooperation mechanisms, institutional arrangements and legal requirements for exchange and confrontation of economic statistical data;

b) Review of obstacles for organizing data sharing, such as confidentiality issues and constraints;

c) Review of the outcomes and benefits as a result of different data exchange exercises in economic statistics;

d) Assessment of ways in which international organizations could facilitate the process.

G. Data integration (DISA 5.5 Management and development of technological resources (including standards for electronic data exchange and data sharing)

30. Data integration is a big challenge for official statistics. Data sources are becoming more and more varied. Censuses and sample surveys are complemented by various administrative sources (not only registers), geo-spatial data, Big Data, etc. Countries are trying to deal with this issue are developing their own solutions. An in-depth review of this topic would be very useful to identify:

a) What are the main sources and what kind of data need to be integrated;

b) What are the main related issues, such as legal, administrative, confidentiality, data access, technical barriers, data quality issues (small samples, etc.);
c) Case studies/examples of how countries have dealt with this issue.

31. The in-depth review paper on this topic could use a similar approach as the in-depth review of strategic partnerships (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/2, paper by Canada) covering the scope and definition of data integration, international overview of statistical activities associated with data integration, and the related issues, challenges and key factors for success. An in-depth review by the Bureau could then provide useful input to the work of the HLG-MOS to address the identified issues.

TOPICS RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

H. Main data gaps in UNECE countries considering the upcoming SDG reporting
(DISA 3.3.6 Sustainable development)

32. Monitoring progress towards SDGs calls for significant investment in official statistics, also in statistically advanced countries. Statisticians are concerned about the challenge of reporting on SDGs. Therefore, we should analyse in more detail what is needed from statistical offices, which are the data gaps that should be addressed by NSOs, and whether any priorities could be set for the reporting. The statistical community is expected to report on SDGs as of 2016.

33. UNECE provided a mapping of the suggested indicators of the *CES Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development* with the targets and the proposed indicators for SDGs. Since the endorsement of the CES Recommendations, eight UNECE countries have piloted the recommendations and the related indicators. This provides an initial understanding of the key data gaps, but only covers part of the data needed for SDG indicators.

34. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:
a) Exploring the SDG indicators to identify key areas for NSO involvement and the likely data gaps;
b) Analysing the possibility to select core indicators for SDG reporting by NSOs;
c) Considering the need for practical guidance in producing SDG indicators;
d) Identifying priority data gaps and recommending actions to support countries in filling these gaps.

35. The in-depth review could provide input to the road map for the development of official statistics for monitoring SDGs in UNECE region, particularly on how to identify new areas of indicators and the need for capacity building.

I. Review of the global SDG indicators' relevance for UNECE region

36. The UN General Assembly adopted the SDGs on 25 September. The outcome document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* states in its Article 75 that "the Goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels which will be developed by Member States …".

37. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG) is currently developing a global list to measure the 169 SDG targets. The list is planned to be finalized by mid-December 2015, to be adopted by the UN Statistical Commission on 8-11 March 2016. It will be subsequently adopted by ECOSOC and the General Assembly.

38. Following the adoption of the global list, the UNECE region will need to develop complementary indicators to reflect the situation and priorities in the region. This list should be aligned with the global list not to increase the reporting burden of countries. It should inform the SDG review process in the UNECE region in cases where the global indicators are not relevant or do not provide enough information for the region. For example, in case of the input-oriented policy indicators and concerning targets focusing on least developed countries. A review of the list of global indicators is needed for this purpose.

39. The review could analyse:

a) The targets that are focusing on LDCs, small-island developing states, etc. and the relevance of the related indicators for UNECE region;

b) Indicators that do not provide information allowing to monitor progress in UNECE region, such as policy related qualitative indicators (e.g. number of countries adopting a certain policy);

c) Other indicators that could be replaced by a more relevant indicator for UNECE region.

40. The review would provide input to the road map for the development of official statistics for monitoring SDGs in the UNECE region, and for developing an SDG indicator set for the region. For this purpose, a good timing for this review could be for the February CES Bureau meeting, in case there are interested countries or organizations to undertake this work.

J. Issues related to data disaggregation

41. The outcome document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015 highlights that "quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making." In addition, the review processes for SDGs should be rigorous and informed by data "disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts."

42. Data disaggregation is often a subject of concern, due to issues such as availability, reliability, confidentiality, among others. Very detailed breakdowns in indicators can result in low reliability due to low sample size, particularly in small countries.

43. The aim of this in-depth review would be to review the current approaches national statistical offices use to deal with data disaggregation, particularly under the lens of SDGs implementation. Specific topics to be covered could include:

a) Common disaggregations reported by NSOs;
b) Minimum sample sizes for the production of disaggregated data;
c) Confidentiality issues;
d) Legal issues;
e) Quality and costs concerns;

f) Use of administrative data as an alternative to surveys: some country case studies.

44. The in-depth review would feed into preparing the road map for developing official statistics for monitoring SDGs in UNECE region.

K. Capacity building for monitoring SDGs (DISA 3.3 Multi-domain statistics and indicators and 5.7 Technical cooperation and capacity building)

45. The outcome document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015 sets the 2030 sustainable development agenda with 17 Goals and 169 targets. A list of indicators to measure the goals and targets is to be agreed by IAEG-SDGs by December 2015. Many of the proposed indicators are not yet available, or might not be available for certain countries. Therefore, plans for capacity building are needed, as stated in the *Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals* adopted by CES in June 2015. The CES *Declaration* includes the commitment to "develop statistical capacity in countries to ensure good quality reporting on SDGs" and highlights that "additional effort and investments will be required to maintain the necessary infrastructure for the production of statistics".

46. The aim of this in-depth review would be to review the current capabilities national statistical offices have to monitor SDGs and produce the agreed indicators, and areas where capacity building will be necessary. Specific topics to be covered could include:

a) Stocktaking of current capabilities NSOs in the region to calculate the SDG indicators;

b) Exploring the most urgent areas for capacity building to enable monitoring SDGs;

c) Identifying key partners and possible sources of funding for capacity building;

d) Considering how to use existing expert forums, groups and networks to support capacity building;

e) Suggesting effective cooperation mechanisms among statistical offices and international statistical organizations.

L. Harnessing modernization of statistical production for monitoring SDGs (related to DISA 5.5 Management and development of technological resources and DISA 3.3.6 Sustainable development, but not limited to those)

47. The Report *A World That Counts* recommends that we should "urgently leverage emerging data sources for SDG monitoring through an SDG data lab" and "develop systems for global data sharing". The High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) has worked over the last four years to rethink statistical production by developing common standards that harness technological advances, new types of data such as Big Data, and enhance statistical services. The High-Level Group would be well placed for identifying areas and measures for using common infrastructures and tools to report on the various indicators related to SDGs, help solve countries' capacity problems and produce efficiencies when national statistical offices, for their part, are facing the huge reporting challenge.

48. One suggestion of the Report was to develop a "world statistics cloud" to store data and metadata produced by different institutions but according to common standards, rules and specifications. To bring these ideas closer to reality, a review should be done on what national

statistical offices and the international statistical community could realistically do in terms of technologies they could use and mechanisms they could provide for SDG reporting.

49. The issues to be discussed in the in-depth review may include:

a) What kind of a technical solution or mechanism could be envisaged for SDG reporting by official statisticians?

b) Which existing standards, technologies and tools used by official statisticians could be helpful in the SDG reporting?

c) How could statistical offices contribute to creating a mechanism for SDG reporting and what should be their role in that?

d) What should be the role of the international network of official statisticians in a possible global "Network of Data Innovation Networks" foreseen by the Report?

e) What are the biggest obstacles for realizing an efficient SDG reporting system?

ANNEX 1

Topics reviewed in-depth since 2010

- The use of secondary and mixed sources for official statistics (Jun 2010, paper by UNECE)
- Time-use surveys (Nov 2010, paper by Germany)
- Measuring the information society and statistics on science, technology and innovation (Nov 2010, paper by Australia)
- Education statistics (Nov 2011, paper by Australia)
- Global manufacturing (Nov 2011, paper by the Netherlands)
- Household survey methods (Nov 2011, paper by Canada)
- Banking, insurance and financial statistics (Nov 2012, paper by IMF)
- Poverty statistics (Nov 2012, paper by Ukraine and Eurostat)
- Statistics related to population ageing (Nov 2012, paper by UNECE)
- Political and other community activities, incl. volunteering (Feb 2013, paper by Mexico)
- Entrepreneurship (Oct 2013, paper by OECD and Eurostat, note by UNECE)
- Big Data (Oct 2013, paper by UNECE with input from a Task Team on Big Data)
- Social protection (Jan 2014, paper by UNECE)
- Leading, composite and sentiment indicators (Jan 2014, paper by UNECE)
- Population projections (Oct 2014, paper by the United Kingdom and Canada)
- Measuring extreme events and disasters (Oct 2014, paper by Mexico)
- Process oriented approach to statistical production (Feb 2015, paper by Turkey)
- Labour mobility and globalisation (Feb 2015, paper by Austria)
- Strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry (Oct 2015, paper by Canada)
- Diversification of population census methodology and sources (Oct 2015, paper by Finland and Turkey)

ANNEX 2
Classification of International Statistical Activities
(DISA classification, Rev. 1 - October 2009)

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 organization 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

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