



STATISTICS

Better evidence for better decisions

Coherent, reliable and internationally comparable statistics are crucial for the monitoring of social and economic progress of countries in the UNECE region. Official statistics provide national and international decision-makers with a picture of the economy, the environment and society, enabling them to formulate policies and to monitor and evaluate their delivery.

The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau play an important role in **coordinating the international statistical activities** in the UNECE region. Some of their main objectives are to improve the quality and comparability of statistics, achieve greater uniformity in concepts and definitions, respond to any emerging need for international statistical cooperation and promote statistical standards. The participation of the major international organizations (Eurostat, OECD, United Nations Statistical Division, Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS, IMF, World Bank, etc.) is important to avoid duplication of work and ensure the efficient use of resources of the various international agencies.

During the plenary sessions, the CES holds every year two one-day **seminars** that provide a forum for top-level management of statistical offices to explore the fundamental issues of statistical systems and leading-edge emerging topics. The seminars in 2010 were devoted to the **impact of the global crisis on statistical systems** and to the **role of the spatial dimension in official statistics**.

In 2011, one of the seminars will deal with the **organization of data collection and sharing, and the management challenges for the implementation of the SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) standard**. The seminar will allow the exchange of

experiences in the management of data collection and sharing in national statistical organizations. It will focus specifically on the strategic challenges related to the implementation of SDMX standards from a management perspective.



The second seminar will be devoted to **measuring human capital**. This seminar will discuss the economic importance of knowledge and skills in the context of labour economics, growth theory, business economics, sustainable development, and in particular in relation to the demographic change. The personal and social well-being effects of learning are seen as being as important as the economic ones. Statisticians are in the early stages of work in this area and are trying to reach common views on why and how to measure human capital.

A key tool of the Conference and its Bureau for coordination of the international statistical work is the **Database of International Statistical Activities**, maintained by the UNECE secretariat. The database (<http://unece.unog.ch/disa>) informs users about the statistical activities carried out by about 30 international organizations in the UNECE region. Recently, the statistical classification used by the database has been adopted for various other purposes. For example, it is used for reporting on technical assistance activities by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century - PARIS 21 Consortium. The first three domains of this classification have also been adopted as part of the SDMX standard.

Economic statistics

The UNECE secretariat actively supports the **implementation of the updated global standard on national accounting, the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA)** in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-East Europe.

In early 2010 the UNECE secretariat conducted a workshop on the main challenges and priorities for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in these countries in order to identify areas where support in terms of regional meetings and technical assistance is needed. The initiatives were well received by countries and partner international organizations. A second workshop is planned in 2011.

The **impact of globalization on statistics**, and in particular on national accounts, is a widely debated issue in the international statistical community. Distortions in statistics emerge when accounting for cross border operations of multinational companies, international transactions in intellectual property, remittances, foreign direct investments, transit trade and re-export, labour mobility, e-commerce, etc. A group of experts

worked successfully during the year to develop a practical guidance and recommendations on how to deal with these distortions and improve the quality of economic statistics. The work of the group, which benefited from the contributions of experts from Eurostat, OECD, IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO), has progressed well. A publication entitled *Impact of Globalization on National Accounts* is expected to be finalized in 2011.

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The Conference also supports other areas of economic statistics. UNECE chairs the Intersecretariat Working Group on **Price Statistics** which coordinates international activities on price statistics. Currently, a new *Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices* is being drafted under the auspices of the Intersecretariat Group and is scheduled to be published by Eurostat in 2011.

A task force is currently working to reflect the developments over the last decade in data sources and methods, and to provide the latest practical and quality assurance guidelines to national statistical offices in relation to household income statistics. In that context the update of the internationally recognized *Canberra Group Handbook* has progressed according to plan. A new capacity building programme on **short-term economic statistics** in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia has been developed with the financial support from the World Bank. A number of regional workshops will be organized in 2011 and training materials and guidelines will be produced in English and Russian. In the area of **business statistics** the secretariat continues to participate in the international work on business registers.

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Social and demographic statistics

UNECE plays a leading role (often jointly with other organizations) in selected areas of **social and demographic statistics**, such as population and housing censuses, migration, gender statistics and crime statistics. A number of task forces created by the Bureau of the Conference have successfully continued their work to develop methodological guidelines and recommendations.

The *Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses* developed under the auspices of the CES are widely accepted as an international standard. In 2010, the UNECE secretariat helped countries in the region implementing the Recommendations. The secretariat, in cooperation with Eurostat and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organized two expert meetings and one training workshop to address issues related to the upcoming censuses. UNECE also participated in the international monitoring of the population and housing census in the United Nations Administered Region of Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Migration statistics are high on the agenda for most countries in the UNECE region. As a result, a work session and two training workshops were held in 2010 to facilitate progress in the production and comparability of international migration statistics. A task force has been analysing the impact of the different definitions of the length of stay of migrants on migration estimates. In addition, a new initiative was launched to improve the measurement of socio-economic conditions of migrants.

In 2010, the Conference endorsed the Manual on **Gender Statistics**. The Manual was published in English, and a Russian version should be ready in early 2011. Importantly enough, the World Bank is planning to have the Manual translated into other languages so that it may be used as a training material outside the UNECE region. Recently, a task force started working to improve the monitoring of gender equality by using gender-relevant statistical indicators and data. Furthermore, two subregional and two national training workshops on gender statistics were conducted in cooperation with the World Bank.



In response to the General Assembly resolutions on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (Resolutions 61/143, 62/133, 63/155 and 64/137), a questionnaire was developed to collect data on globally agreed indicators on **violence against women**. This questionnaire is currently tested in countries in various parts of the world and is expected to become a standard data collection tool to be recommended to national statistical offices globally. An expert group meeting and a regional training workshop were conducted on this topic. This UNECE work is closely linked to the development of guidelines for producing statistics on violence against women undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

Important work was undertaken to develop indicators to facilitate understanding of the **quality aspects of employment** from the point of view of the individual employee. This issue goes beyond aspects of work that are legal or regulated to cover, for example, safety and ethics of employment, balancing work and non-working life, security of employment, skills development and training, workplace relationships and work motivation. A task force was asked to prepare a publication on Measuring Quality of Employment that contains country pilot reports. The work was conducted in close cooperation with the ILO project on measuring decent work and the European Commission's quality of work indicators.

In the area of **crime statistics**, UNECE, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, continues to promote the dissemination of the Manual on victimization surveys that was published in 2010. Work was undertaken to produce versions of the Manual in Russian, French and Spanish. In addition, a new task force was created to analyse methodological issues related to the development of an international classification of crimes for statistical purposes.

Another task force has worked to develop guidelines for measuring **health status**. The work is conducted in close coordination with other initiatives in this field undertaken by Eurostat and the World Health Organization. The task force is also finalizing a new questionnaire for collecting data on health status.

Finally, a new activity is launched to develop common guidelines and good practices in implementing **time-use surveys**. These surveys are an important source of information on social behaviour of the members of society, shedding light on unpaid work, quality of life, living conditions, gender equality, etc.

Environment and sustainable development statistics

Close attention to environmental and climate change issues have increased the demand for high quality statistics in this field.

In 2010, the work on improving environmental data production, environmental reporting and comparability of environmental statistics in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe made good progress. A task force was established jointly by the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians. Its work was also sponsored by the United Nations Statistics Division in New York. The task force reviewed about half of the **environmental indicators** recommended by the *Guidelines on Environmental Indicators*, which was endorsed by the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in 2007. The task force will contribute to the preparation of the next Ministerial Meeting in 2011. It provides a unique opportunity for **environmental experts** and **statisticians** from various countries to come together, sometimes for the first time, and exchange experience and share knowledge. The mandate of this task force was recently extended by both the CES Bureau and the Committee on Environmental Policy so that it may review the remaining indicators of the Guidelines.

An important feature of UNECE's online statistical database is the gender breakdown

In response to an increasing demand for statistics related to **climate change**, the CES Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to explore the degree to which national statistical offices are involved in climate change related work and in compiling greenhouse gas inventories. The secretariat developed a questionnaire for this purpose and will carry out the survey in close collaboration with Eurostat and the United Nations Statistics Division in New York.

Substantial progress has been made in developing a framework to measure **sustainable development**. A task force was established as a follow-up to earlier work published in 2009 to further advance the conceptual framework of the capital approach and less developed areas like measuring human and social capital. The conceptual work will also be broadened to cover the quality of life. This activity is strongly linked to the work undertaken by other institutions, such as the Stiglitz Report, the European Commission's initiative “GDP and Beyond”, and the OECD project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

UNECE will also continue to provide statistical support to the countries in the region in **monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs). UNECE has established a network of national MDG focal points in statistical offices and has organized a number of capacity development workshops in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division in New York.

Management of statistical information

The Conference and its Bureau are involved in various activities related to the management of statistical information systems, statistical methodology and statistical dissemination and communication. UNECE provides **information systems managers, methodologists and communication experts** from national and international statistical organizations with a unique forum to share experiences. Recently, a High-level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics was created to oversee this work.



Different teams of specialists are currently preparing guidelines and recommendations to improve the processing and dissemination of data in statistical organizations. The generic statistical business process model developed by the group on statistical metadata is becoming a *de facto* global standard for describing the organization of a statistical production process. Cooperation with other international statistical organizations remains strong, particularly in the field of statistical data and metadata exchange standards. Further steps will be taken to facilitate the sharing of software, ideas and experiences between statistical organizations to encourage more efficient and sustainable national statistical production systems.

Annual expert meetings on the **dissemination and communication of statistics** are organized by UNECE to share experiences and promote good practices in communicating with data users. A new guide to communicating with the media has just been released as part of the very popular *Making Data Meaningful* series. The first issue in the series, a *guide to writing stories about numbers*, is currently in its third print run to meet the demand for this widely used publication.

UNECE has a long and successful history of involvement in efforts to enhance the capacity of countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to meet international statistical standards

UNECE Statistical Database

UNECE maintains a **free online statistical database** (www.unece.org/stats/data) available in English and Russian, covering its member countries. The database includes **macro-economic, social, demographic, forestry and transport** indicators. An important feature is the **gender** breakdown, which is included where possible. The database will be further enhanced by the addition of data **on progress towards the MDGs**. A major update of forestry data will be made in cooperation with the Trade and Timber Division and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The annual survey of external database users will be supplemented with a new survey of UNECE staff to evaluate how the database could better meet their needs.

Technical assistance

The UNECE Statistical Division has a long and successful history of involvement in efforts to **enhance the capacity of countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia** to meet international standards and guidelines in the collection, production and dissemination of official statistics. UNECE also helps these countries to strengthen their statistical legislation and to implement the **United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**, a standard that was adopted by UNECE in 1992 and at the global level in 1994.



In order to support the development of national statistical capacities, UNECE, in cooperation with other national and international donors, organizes regular seminars, training workshops and advisory services on various statistical domains related to population censuses and migration statistics, economic development, monitoring the achievement of MDGs, gender and violence against women, sustainable development, statistical quality, statistical literacy, and communication with users.

UNECE, together with Eurostat and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), is involved in **conducting global assessments (GA)** of the national statistical systems in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The purpose of a GA is to provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. It helps national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to have a deep knowledge of their institutional and administrative framework for the programming of statistical cooperation. GAs were carried out in Armenia and Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The Republic of Moldova and Ukraine also requested a GA of their respective national statistical systems and some preparatory work is underway.

Despite significant improvements in the capacity to produce official statistics in recent years, timely and reliable official statistics are often not available for some countries in the UNECE region. Recent global assessments and other reviews carried out by UNECE show that the global crisis and its impact on public finance have further reduced their capacity to produce high quality statistical information.

In that context, technical assistance provided to the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-East Europe will also focus on **streamlining the production processes of official statistics from the collection of raw data to the dissemination and communication of the results**. Keywords are efficiency, comparability and sustainability with a special focus on economic and social statistics. This will be done by promoting the exchange at subregional level of national good practices, undertaking benchmark studies and stimulating the foundation of an active network of competences.

Documents and presentations from all meetings, seminars and training workshops organized can be found on the Statistical Division's website at:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/docs.date.e.htm>