

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2016/2017 Bureau  
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-15 February 2017

Item III (d) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A TASK FORCE ON WASTE STATISTICS**

**Note by the Secretariat  
in consultation with a number of countries and organizations<sup>1</sup>**

*This document presents the terms of reference for the Task Force on Waste Statistics. In October 2016, the Bureau approved the proposal for work on waste statistics prepared by the Netherlands and UNECE Secretariat, in consultation with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Ukraine, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to draft terms of reference for the work together with interested countries and organizations. **The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Task Force at its February 2017 meeting.***

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Waste statistics are of high policy interest in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), green economy, resource efficiency, circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and many other policy initiatives. These initiatives increase the attention to the management, reuse and recycling of waste, use of waste for generating energy and hazardous waste. Emerging issues also include the need for information on food waste, textile waste, electronic waste and end-of-life vehicles.

2. While there is an increasing demand for waste statistics, there are important conceptual and methodological problems. The lack of internationally harmonized concepts, definitions and methodologies leads to incomparability of data. There is no international classification of waste for statistics outside the European Union (EU). The main guiding documents on environment statistics and environmental-economic accounts, such as the Framework for Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) give only general guidance and leave room for different approaches and interpretations.

3. Furthermore, important aspects of waste management, such as illegal waste collection and trade, illegal dumping, informal waste picking and waste management by private sector are not included in official waste statistics and are difficult to capture in statistics. Recycling figures may be largely underestimated when the informal waste collection (i.e. managed outside the traditional waste management system) is not considered. Emerging issues, such as the recovery value of waste, food waste and electronic waste are not or are only partially covered.

4. The CES Bureau discussed the conceptual and methodological problems in waste statistics at its 2016 October meeting based on a paper prepared by UNECE and Statistics Netherlands in consultation with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Ukraine, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD. The CES Bureau noted that compilation of waste statistics involves many conceptual

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD

and methodological challenges and progress is slow. Many problems with waste statistics are due to the fact that there is no common framework on waste statistics to provide a basis for harmonising the concepts and definitions, developing standard classifications and providing methodological guidance.

5. The Bureau decided to set up a Task Force on waste statistics and requested the Secretariat together with Canada, Mexico, Eurostat, OECD, UNSD and other interested parties to prepare terms of reference for the Task Force to be submitted to the February 2017 Bureau meeting.

6. The CES Bureau also recommended bringing the issues related to waste statistics to the attention of the policy audience, such as the OECD Environmental Policy Committee and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

## II. MANDATE

7. The work of the Task Force on Waste Statistics is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period of two years, after which it will submit a final report, including a draft conceptual framework on waste statistics and concrete recommendations for follow-up activities.

## III. OBJECTIVES

8. The objective of the Task Force is to **develop a conceptual framework on waste statistics and draft a glossary of the most important terms and definitions in waste statistics**. The framework should:

- (a) Be consistent with FDES and SEEA, and the major international policy frameworks, namely SDGs, Basel Convention and the EU Waste Strategy;
- (b) Build upon existing concepts used by Eurostat, UNSD and OECD in current data collection on waste statistics, and take into account existing national frameworks on waste and waste statistics;
- (c) Define the scope of waste statistics, covering also illegal trade, illegal dumping and informal waste management;
- (d) Define waste, and in particular the boundary with products and materials;
- (e) Define a general sequence of waste flows from generation of waste to its treatment or final disposal and the related key statistics;
- (f) Clearly distinguish and describe the different concepts “sources of waste”, “types of waste”, “management of waste” and “characteristics of waste”;
- (g) Support a coherent integration of emerging issues (e.g. food waste and electronic waste) and other waste streams or waste characteristics (e.g. recovery value) in the future;
- (h) Identify which parts of the framework are already covered by official statistics and which parts could potentially be covered in the future;
- (i) Be applicable to produce geo-referenced waste statistics.

9. The Task Force will also identify areas of waste statistics where further conceptual and methodological work could be undertaken to support the implementation of the framework. This may include activities such as harmonization and improvement of existing waste classifications,

development of methodologies to fill important information gaps (e.g. informal or illegal waste collection and trade, food waste etc.), drafting of implementation guidelines, etc.

10. In pursuing these objectives, the Task Force should cooperate with the UN agencies and other international organizations working in this area, including Eurostat, OECD, UNSD and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. The work of the Task Force will build upon existing guidance documents, terms, definitions and classifications of these organizations.

#### **IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS**

11. The Task Force will undertake the following activities:

- (a) Identify in a systematic way the most important policy needs on waste statistics (including SDGs, Green Growth, etc.), map them with existing statistics and carry out a gap-analysis (how “fit for purpose” waste statistics are and what needs to be developed). The paper on *Problems with Waste Statistics and a Proposal for Action* (ECE/CES/BUR/2016/OCT/7) will be a starting point for the analysis;
- (b) Define the scope of official waste statistics and clarify important system boundaries;
- (c) Develop a conceptual framework for waste statistics, and describe its links to other relevant frameworks and statistical domains (such as FDES, SEEA, SDG indicators, Green Growth, circular economy, Driving-force-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework, agriculture and water statistics, etc.);
- (d) Map the waste statistics framework with existing official statistics and identify parts which should become part of official statistics in the future;
- (e) Draft a glossary of key terms and definitions, based on those being used in current data collection on waste statistics;
- (f) Identify concrete follow-up activities focused on specific areas of waste statistics to support the implementation of the framework.

12. The main output of the Task Force’s work will be a *Conceptual Framework on Waste Statistics*, including the outcomes of above tasks:

- (a) Description of user needs for statistics on waste;
- (b) Definition of the scope of statistics on waste;
- (c) Core of the framework: a structure to organise the concepts and definitions on waste and their interlinkages;
- (d) Clarification of important system boundaries and links to other frameworks;
- (e) Glossary of key terms and definitions.

#### **V. TIMETABLE**

The Task Force is foreseen to work for two years. A detailed work plan (including milestones and interim deliverables) will be drafted in the first two months after setting up of the Task Force. The work is planned to finish with the approval of the *Draft Conceptual Framework on Waste Statistics* by the CES in June 2019.

## **VI. METHODS OF WORK**

13. The Task Force will work primarily via e-mail, wiki workspace and telephone conferences. Physical meetings of the Task Force could be organized back-to-back to other meetings that would be attended by a significant number of Task Force members.

## **VII. MEMBERSHIP**

14. The Task Force will include experts on waste statistics from national statistical offices, other involved national agencies and international organizations.

15. The following countries and international organizations expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD. Other countries and international organizations are welcome to participate in the work.

16. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the Task Force.

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