

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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

Approved

Item III (f) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON MEASURING OLD-AGE  
POPULATION IN INSTITUTIONS**

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics*, which the CES Bureau approved in October 2016, proposed the measurement of institutional populations as an area for future work. Furthermore, in the consultation on the Recommendations with CES members, several countries called for the establishment of a Task Force dedicated to examining methodological issues around institutional populations, given the importance, scope and relevance of the topic and associated challenges with respect to the production of statistics relating to older people.
2. Statistics on social and demographic topics are typically produced from surveys of private households. For many statistics, this is suitable, especially when balanced against the additional costs that the coverage of institutional populations would entail.
3. In ageing populations, however, the absolute number of people living in institutions – such as care homes for older people – can be significant, and in some countries of the UNECE region it is growing. The proportions of older people living in institutions also vary considerably between countries, due to different approaches to the care of older people and to different regulations, benefit systems and types of care.
4. If a topic correlates with living in an institution, then an estimate based on private households only would not represent the total population adequately. For example, estimates of the prevalence of physical or cognitive disabilities would probably be too low if those living in nursing homes – for whom such disability might be the very reason they are living in an institution – were not sampled. Conversely, estimates of subjective well-being might be biased upwards by the exclusion of those institutionalized due to ill-health or absence of family care.
5. At present, while this risk of bias is recognized, there is no standardized approach for overcoming it. Definitions of what constitutes an institution differ between countries. In cases where institutional populations are surveyed, methods for their identification and data collection vary. In particular, there is variation in the extent to which proxy responses are permitted and the criteria for allowing this.
6. The UNECE *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics* identify the following issues for future work on measuring institutional populations:
  - (a) The term ‘institutional populations’ should be more clearly defined, in a way which aligns with the CES census recommendations and with clear criteria for the determination of residence in an institution;

- (b) Countries should consider ways to include institutional populations in survey frames or develop separate data collection tools for them;
- (c) Further work should start with compiling an overview of national practices.

7. In October 2016, the CES Bureau supported the proposals for further work on ageing-related statistics and emphasized the importance of taking into account populations of older persons living in institutions.

## **II. MANDATE**

8. The work of the Task Force will be conducted within the framework of the CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for the period from February 2017 to June 2019.

## **III. OBJECTIVE**

9. The main objectives of the Task Force are to:

- (a) Develop standard definitions and classifications of ‘institution’ and ‘institutional populations’ *as they pertain to older people*;
- (b) Provide guidelines for statistical offices on whether, when and how to include such populations in the production of statistics on ageing-related topics.

10. The guidelines should aid countries in producing unbiased and comparable statistics on ageing-related topics.

11. The work of the Task Force should build on the work already conducted by the UNECE Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics and the European Health Interview Survey Task Force which in 2011 produced a set of recommendations specific to health surveys in the European Union Member States.

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

12. The Task Force will carry out the following activities:

- (a) Review of the definitions of ‘institution’ that are currently employed by countries across data sources including surveys, censuses and administrative sources, especially with respect to institutions relevant to older people. This will include an analysis of the extent to which, and reasons why, these definitions differ from the CES Census Recommendations;
- (b) Review of the methods used by national statistical offices in measuring characteristics of institutional populations of older persons, including approaches to identification and sampling, access, and use of proxy respondents;
- (c) Description of good practices in measuring institutional populations of older persons by integrating them into samples and by treating them separately;
- (d) Experimental studies to assess the bias resulting from omission of institutional populations in estimates of socio-economic and health characteristics of older people;
- (e) Formulation of recommendations in the above areas.

13. The Task Force will produce the following outputs:

- (a) Definitions and classifications of ‘institution’ and ‘institutional populations’ as they pertain to older people, including a set of criteria for ‘borderline’ cases that fall in-between private households and full residential care homes;
- (b) Compilations of case studies or good practices;
- (c) Recommendations for the treatment of institutional populations of older persons in social surveys and other data sources for the production of ageing-related statistics.

## V. TIMETABLE

14. The activities of the Task Force will take place according to the following tentative schedule:

Feb-Apr 2017	Form Task Force and draft work plan with activities, timing and division of work
May-Dec 2017	Review definitions and methods; collect good practices
Jan-Jun 2018	Conduct experimental studies and analyze results
Jul-Oct 2018	Draft recommendations (including proposals for definitions and classifications) based on reviews, good practices and experiments
Nov 2018 – Jan 2019	Consolidate and finalize draft recommendations
Feb 2019	Present draft recommendations to CES Bureau for feedback
Mar-May 2019	Electronic consultation among CES countries; revise according to input from Bureau and from consultation; finalize and edit
Jun 2019	Present final recommendations to CES plenary session for approval

## VI. METHOD OF WORK

15. The Task Force will work via email, wiki workspace, and telephone or web conferences. Face-to-face meetings may be convened on the basis of need, specific tasks to be accomplished and available resources.

## VII. MEMBERSHIP

16. The following countries and international organizations expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Austria, Israel, Italy, Norway, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Eurostat. Other countries and organizations will be invited to join the Task Force after the terms of reference are approved by the Bureau.

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

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