

Second Meeting of the 2011/2012 Bureau  
Geneva, Switzerland, 2-3 November 2011

Approved

Item 4(f) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL  
GUIDELINES ON STATISTICAL BUSINESS REGISTERS**

**Prepared by the UNECE secretariat**

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Over the last decade, the growing demand for better and more detailed business statistics has put focus on statistical business registers (SBRs) and their role in the production of business statistics. While traditionally the primary role of SBRs has been to provide sample frames for business statistics, SBRs of today often include more information so that they can be used in their own right as a source from which to derive business statistics. SBRs have also proved to be central for NSOs' efforts to reduce response burden and utilise administrative data sources and for the combination of survey data and administrative data.

2. There is also growing interest in the role of SBRs as the backbone in the production of business statistics and the potential benefits of integrating the SBR with other statistics. These benefits include both improvement of the quality of existing statistics and development of new statistics by e.g. combining SBRs with information from other administrative or statistical registers. Integration of SBRs also means an opportunity to streamline or "industrialise" the statistical production process. The High-Level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics, established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, has raised a number of challenges for the development of the statistical products and the production process in its vision for the production of official statistics in future. Statistical business registers will be important in this development. A number of countries have already gained significant experience in integrating their SBRs in the statistical production process and in utilising the SBR in combination with other data sources that would be useful to communicate to other countries.

3. While there is great diversity in the content and usability of SBRs among countries and regions, the demand for internationally comparable business statistics is growing. A set of guidelines would be useful to assist statistical offices in improving international comparability of their business statistics. The need for international guidance or recommendations of good practices has been raised on different occasions by countries participating in the Wiesbaden Group and in the meetings of the UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Group of Experts on Business Registers. The proposal was discussed at the Wiesbaden Group meeting in 2010 in Tallinn where it was supported by Eurostat and some of the participating countries. The Steering Group of the Wiesbaden Group at its meeting on 14 September 2011 supported the idea of developing international guidelines, taking existing relevant materials into account and targeting developed as well as developing economies.

4. The meeting of the Group of Experts on Business Registers on 14-15 September 2011 supported the development of a set of international guidelines on business registers. There was general agreement that the guidelines should target developed as well as developing statistical systems and address issues concerned with the traditional core role of business registers, response burden, use of administrative sources and the role of business registers in streamlining the statistical production. The meeting agreed that the UNECE should draft a proposal for terms of reference for a task force to be established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statistician (CES) to undertake the work.

## **II. MANDATE**

5. The Task Force reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau. The Task Force will provide progress reports on activities and outputs to be evaluated by the Bureau.

6. Drafts of the report will be circulated to the meetings of the Wiesbaden Group and the Group of Experts on Business Registers for discussions and comments.

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

7. The objective is to produce a set of international guidelines and recommendations of good practices on SBR to help countries in developing and maintaining their SBR. The guidelines should:

- (a) Be targeted at both developed and less developed statistical systems;
- (b) Take into account existing materials (including the Eurostat Business Registers – Recommendations Manual);
- (c) Address issues raised by the High-Level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics;
- (d) Include country experiences and examples of good practices whenever appropriate;
- (e) Clarify typology, concepts and definitions, including on statistical units;
- (f) Provide practical guidance on core SBR issues (development and maintenance);
- (g) Link to other statistical subject areas, such as national accounts and trade statistics;
- (h) Provide guidance on the use of administrative sources in the SBR, including guidance on cooperation with owners of administrative data sources;
- (i) Provide guidance on how to combine survey and administrative data sources;
- (j) Provide guidance and practical examples on how to use the SBR in its own right and in combination with other registers for the production of statistics;
- (k) Provide guidance and practical examples on the integration of business registers in the statistical production process.

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

8. The Task Force will agree on the content and structure of the report in detail and organise the drafting of the chapters. Drafts of the report will be circulated to the meetings of the Wiesbaden Group and the Group of Experts on Business Registers for discussions and comments.
9. The output in terms of the report should be published.

#### **V. TIMETABLE**

10. The following timetable is proposed:

End 2011	The Task Force constitutes itself with members and chairs
Early 2012	The Task Force agrees on detailed table of contents for the report and allocates authors and reviewers to the chapters of the report
September 2012	The first drafts to be presented and discussed at the Wiesbaden Group meeting in Washington
November 2012	Progress report to the CES Bureau
September 2013	Final draft to be discussed at the biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Business registers, organised jointly by UNECE, OECD and Eurostat
November 2013	Consultation of final draft with the Bureau members, to be circulated to all CES member countries and organizations for comment
Early 2014	Country consultations
June 2014	Presentation of the final report to the CES plenary session for endorsement

#### **VI. METHODS OF WORK**

11. Work will be carried out using e-mail and audio-conferences. The Task Force should meet in conjunction with meetings of the Wiesbaden Group and the Group of Experts on Business Registers.

#### **VII. MEMBERSHIP**

12. The following countries and international organizations have expressed their intention to participate and contribute to the work of the Task Force: Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Eurostat, OECD and UNSD.
13. The secretariat will be provided by UNECE.

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