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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Conference of European Statisticians

#### Fifty-ninth plenary session

Geneva, 14-16 June 2011

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

#### Progress reports and work of the CES teams of specialists

### Report of the third meeting of the 2009/2010 Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians

#### Note by the secretariat

##### *Summary*

The present report is submitted in compliance with the Rules Governing the Work of the Conference and its Bureau (ECE/CES/2007/8), adopted by the Conference at its fifty-third plenary session. Referring to the Rules, the Bureau acts as a steering body of the Conference. The report includes decisions taken by the Bureau at its 11 June 2010 meeting on the work carried out under the auspices of the Conference.

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## **I. Follow-up to decisions taken by the Conference of European Statisticians 2010 plenary session**

### **A. Outcome of the in-depth review on statistical dissemination, communication and publications**

1. Following the decision of the 2010 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), the Steering Group on Statistical Dissemination and Communication will prepare a proposal for future work on statistical literacy for the 2010 November meeting of the Bureau.

### **B. In-depth review of time-use surveys**

2. Germany will update the paper presented to the CES for the November 2010 meeting of the Bureau. Japan, New Zealand and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offered to contribute.

3. The secretariat will invite the CES members to provide additional written contributions as an input to the Bureau discussion.

### **C. In-depth review of measuring the information society**

4. Australia will revise the paper presented at the CES plenary session on the basis of comments made during the discussion at the Conference. The secretariat will invite CES members to provide written contributions as additional input to the Bureau discussion in November.

### **D. Manual on gender statistics**

5. The Task Force on Gender Statistics Training for Statisticians has completed its mandate with the finalisation of the *Gender Statistics Manual* and is therefore dissolved. The secretariat will prepare proposals for future work on gender statistics for the 2010 November meeting of the CES Bureau.

### **E. Measuring new forms of family and household arrangements**

6. The Task Force on families and households has completed its work with the finalisation of the *Report on Measuring new forms of family and household arrangements* and is therefore dissolved.

### **F. Measuring the quality of employment**

7. The Bureau discussed the following proposals for further work on measuring the quality of employment:

(a) Organisation of a joint United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/International Labor Office (ILO)/Eurostat Expert meeting on measuring quality of employment in 2011;

(b) Undertaking more voluntary tests of the Report's approach in countries (Brazil, Germany, Israel, Kazakhstan and Poland have already indicated interest in pilot testing the approach);

(c) Setting up a Task Force to develop operational definitions and computation methods for the indicators, identify data sources and deal with data comparability aspects.

#### **1. Conclusion**

8. The Bureau supported the organisation of an expert meeting and the undertaking of more voluntary tests in countries. The Bureau will consider setting up a possible Task Force on measuring the quality of employment when the outcomes of the expert meeting and results of tests in more countries are available.

### **G. Seminar on spatial statistics**

9. The secretariat will publish the proceedings of the seminar. As agreed by the CES, the issues highlighted during the seminar will be brought to the attention of the existing CES teams of specialists in related areas who will elaborate proposals for further work.

### **H. Seminar on the impact of global crises on statistical systems**

10. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work to the seminar on the impact of global crises on statistical systems. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The concerns raised at the seminar are in line with the work of the Interagency Group (IAG) on economic and financial statistics, and the recommendations of the joint International Monetary Fund (IMF)/Financial Stability Board (FSB) Secretariat report to the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in October 2009 (entitled "Financial Crisis and Information Gaps", available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/pdf/102909.pdf>) - several of the issues raised are already addressed by the work of the IAG and other international groups;

(b) Further work could be undertaken to understand the social impact of the financial crisis. In addition to data from surveys, some administrative data could be used for monitoring the social impact of the crisis, such as the number of people seeking financial counselling, recipients of benefits, etc. However, there are many gaps and data are often not sufficiently detailed to provide the necessary information;

(c) A compilation of country experiences with lessons learned from the crisis would be very useful;

(d) It will be good to continue the discussion at the November 2010 meeting of the CES Bureau to take into account the results of the international work on this topic (such as the IAG, work on Guidelines for rapid estimates led by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and the recommendations of the G20 report mentioned above);

(e) The CES plenary session next year should be informed about progress made in this area.

#### **1. Conclusion**

11. The CES Bureau will continue the discussion on the impact of global crises on statistical systems at its next meeting in November, based on the following two papers:

(a) A paper by IMF, Eurostat and OECD providing an overview of actions undertaken in this area;

(b) A paper on lessons learned from the crisis at country level, prepared by Canada, including contributions from other members of the Bureau. As a first step, Canada will prepare a rough outline of the paper that the secretariat will distribute to other Bureau members for their input.

## **II. First discussion on CES 2011 seminar: organization of data collection and data sharing/Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) implementation: management challenges from the national perspective**

12. UNECE volunteered to organise the seminar and is looking for countries to be either a co-organiser or session organisers.

13. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The Session Organisers/Discussants should be at the highest possible level to ensure that the seminar deals with issues of interest to the top management of NSOs; the seminar should focus on managerial, not technical, issues;

(b) It is important to keep the ownership and commitment of countries in organising the seminar sessions;

(c) The scope of the seminar should be defined carefully because of limited time;

(d) The seminar should deal with rationalising the national statistical system but should avoid technical discussion;

(e) The seminar could consider how the recommendations on metadata, quality indicators and the generic process model align with each other;

(f) Issues concerning data sharing have to be well defined, the circumstances in countries depend on legal arrangements; however, the data flow with administrative sources should have only one direction;

(g) The session dealing with SDMX risks being too technical, it should clearly focus on managerial issues of interest to country statistical offices.

### **1. Conclusion**

14. New Zealand and Eurostat offered to contribute papers to the seminar. A paper presented by Norway at the OECD/UNECE Expert Group Meeting on SDMX a few months ago could be adapted for the seminar. The World Bank with other SDMX sponsors offered to prepare a paper on the governance model for future SDMX work.

15. The secretariat will prepare a more elaborated outline for the seminar for the CES Bureau November 2010 meeting.

## **III. First discussion on CES 2011 seminar on measuring human capital**

16. The organisers of the seminar are New Zealand and Canada with support by UNECE and OECD.

17. The following points were made in the discussion:

- (a) The organisers should consider the outcomes of the CES seminar in 2007 “Measuring capital – beyond the traditional measures”;
- (b) Various initiatives have been undertaken since the CES seminar in 2007, and it is timely to revisit the issue of human capital in the light of the latest developments;
- (c) It is important to engage the audience actively in the seminar, panel discussion can be efficient if the panellists are good in initiating debate;
- (d) The role of the supporting papers should be clearer, they should be limited to maximum 4 pages with a harmonised structure focusing on issues of general interest, avoiding country progress reports.

#### **1. Conclusion**

- 18. The following countries/organizations are considering the possibility of contributing a paper: Finland (on alternatives to the Jørgenson-Fraumeni approach to measuring human capital), Norway and OECD (on human capital from skills perspective and on social outcomes of education).
- 19. It can be recommended to have two main sessions at the seminar with a maximum of three invited papers for each session (1-2 good invited papers can be also sufficient).
- 20. The seminar organisers will prepare a more elaborated outline for the seminar for the November 2010 meeting of the CES Bureau.

### **IV. In-depth review of the use of secondary and mixed sources for official statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/2

- 21. The Bureau considered the use of secondary and mixed sources for official statistics based on a paper by the secretariat.
- 22. The following points were made in the discussion:
  - (a) The topic is very actual and important, there are many common challenges for statistical offices in this area;
  - (b) Even though the practices and legal arrangements in countries are different, it would be useful to discuss common strategic and management level issues in using secondary sources at the international level. For example, managing relations with other agencies, responsibilities for data maintenance and quality, data sharing, efficiency gains, etc.;
  - (c) Guidelines on using secondary sources could be helpful for developing countries where there are problems with the low quality and reliability of these sources;
  - (d) International guidelines could be useful for defending the NSOs’ position in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, for example in such cases as countering requests to provide statistical microdata for administrative purposes, clarifying responsibilities for data maintenance, etc.;
  - (e) There are specific issues in this area at the national level but it is not clear whether international coordination would provide an added value;
  - (f) A knowledge base providing an overview of the topic would be necessary to clarify whether there is a need for any further work in this area at international level;

(g) The knowledge base could list the managerial level problems in this area and complement these with good practice examples from countries; the first step could be to identify the main issues;

(h) An informal group/network could be helpful in bringing together best practices in this area;

(i) United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) Friends of the Chair group on integrated economic statistics is working on a handbook that deals with some of the issues related to the use of secondary sources in economic statistics. It would be useful to forward the in-depth review paper to Steve Landefeld, the Chair of the group;

(j) Further work in this area under the CES should therefore focus more on social statistics;

(k) The 2011 CES seminar on organization of data collection and data sharing could provide some information on best practices of data use from secondary sources.

## **1. Conclusion**

23. Eurostat will provide additional detailed comments on the paper. IMF will forward the paper to Steve Landefeld, the Chair of the UNSC Friends of the Chair group on integrated economic statistics for consideration when preparing the guidelines on using secondary sources in economic statistics.

24. The Bureau decided on the recommendations presented in para. 35 of the document ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/2 as follows:

(a) The secretariat will create a knowledge base comprising the already existing information; the knowledge base should have a logical structure to facilitate information exchange;

(b) For the time being, no informal body is created to coordinate international work on the use of secondary and mixed sources;

(c) The secretariat will send to the Bureau members the existing training materials on "Using administrative sources for official statistics"; the Bureau will consider at its November meeting how to further develop this material;

(d) The Bureau will decide in November whether there is a need to consider the topic at the CES 2011 plenary session.

## **V. Work of the CES Teams of Specialists**

### **A. Template for the Terms of Reference for Teams of Specialists**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/3

25. The formulation in section VII concerning membership of the groups will be clarified as the members may not be known at the time when the terms of reference are presented for approval (or they may change after the TOR are approved).

26. The Bureau approved the standard template provided in document ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/3 subject to the amendment above.

## **B. Task Force on agriculture**

27. The Bureau had considered in the past the need for setting up a task force on agriculture statistics but the decision was postponed in order to take into account the outcome of the FAO-Eurostat discussions.

28. The Bureau decided that there was no longer a need to create a task force on agriculture statistics.

## **C. Sharing Advisory Board and High-Level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/4 and 5

29. The Bureau discussed whether there is a need for the High-Level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics (HLG-BAS) that forms an extra layer between the SAB (expert level) and the Bureau.

30. The aim of the HLG-BAS would be to coordinate the development of statistical business architecture to enable the use of common statistical tools and applications, and to exchange information about the developments in this area in EU and non-EU countries. Finding people of a suitable level with both technical awareness and vision is a key to the success of this group. These people should be able to bridge the gap between experts and top managers, and act as advisors to the Bureau on business architecture issues.

### **1. Conclusion**

31. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Sharing Advisory Board as presented in document ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/4.

32. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the HLG-BAS as presented in document ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/5 for a trial period of two years, during which it should report regularly to the Bureau. The membership of the group would be a compromise between the two options presented in para. 8 of the paper: the group will be composed of eight members, five of whom are representatives from the highest level of national organizations (including at least two members of the Bureau) and three of international organizations (Eurostat, OECD and UNECE). The Chairs of the Steering Group on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS), the Steering Group on Statistical Metadata (METIS) and the Sharing Advisory Board will be invited to participate as observers.

## **VI. Progress report on the UNECE Statistical Division's work on climate change related statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/6, ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/7

### **A. Survey on involvement of national statistical offices in climate change related work**

33. The Bureau requested the secretariat to implement the proposal on a survey of the activities of statistical organizations in the area of climate change as outlined in para. 6 of the document ECE/CES/BUR/2010/JUNE/6. The design and content of the survey questionnaire will be consulted with the Bureau.



## **B. Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators**

34. The work will continue as planned.

## **C. Measuring energy efficiency**

35. The Bureau members stressed that any proposal by the secretariat in future for new work should include information about the resource requirements. It is not advisable for the secretariat to be involved in substantive work in areas where the necessary expertise is not available and the work can not be undertaken with the existing resources.

36. An important function of the secretariat is to bridge the work done by OECD and Eurostat to the countries that are not members of those organizations. In order to fulfil this function, the secretariat is encouraged to communicate with the Energy Information Agency to find out whether there is a need for cooperation in energy statistics. However, the secretariat should not engage in any substantive work in this area.

## **D. Assessment of indicators of energy vulnerability**

37. The secretariat communicated the request to undertake an assessment of indicators of energy vulnerability from the UNECE Committee on Sustainable Energy. It was pointed out that the composite index of energy vulnerability presented in ECE/ENERGY/2009/3 was misleading. A professional opinion of the CES Bureau in such cases could be useful to help avoid undermining the credibility of official statistics.

### **1. Conclusion**

38. The CES can not undertake the assessment because of lack of resources and a too short time frame. It would be possible to share the experiences and methodology of indicator assessments carried out in other areas. However, the Bureau can come back to this issue to comment at a later stage.

## **E. Proposals by Forestry and Timber Section**

39. The secretariat presented the proposals by the UNECE Trade Division, Forestry and Timber Section on improving communications between forest sector agencies and national statistical institutions in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and on improving the quality of output of the Joint United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics.

### **1. Conclusion:**

40. The secretariat can help the Timber Section to integrate forestry data into the UNECE statistical database but should not get involved in data collection from countries. The Bureau advised the secretariat not to engage in co-organizing a meeting of statistical offices and forest sector agencies due to lack of resources and expertise.

## **VII. Recognition of contributions to the work undertaken by the Conference**

41. Following the request by Julia Lane to recognise the authorship of a contribution that was used as a base material in the development of *Managing Statistical Confidentiality*

and *Microdata Access*, the reference will be added to paragraph 2 of the publication, recognising that it draws from the presentations given at the CES 2003 seminar on confidentiality, and a link will be provided to the web page of the seminar.

42. The Bureau recommends in future to provide in the acknowledgements a reference to the CES meetings and materials that have been used as a basis for developing the CES recommendations and guidelines.

### **VIII. Outcome of the meeting on culture statistics organized by Eurostat**

43. The meeting on culture statistics that had been postponed for a long time due to lack of resources was very positive and led to important developments in the area of culture statistics.

### **IX. Dates and venue of the next CES Bureau meetings**

44. The next CES Bureau meeting will take place on 3-4 November 2010 in Geneva.

45. The short February meeting is tentatively planned to take place on Wednesday, 23 February 2011, from 8:00 to 9:30 in New York, in conjunction with the UN Statistical Commission session.

46. In recent years, the CES plenary session and the OECD Statistics Committee meeting have been held back-to-back. Furthermore, starting from 2010, the Bureau decided to hold a 1-day Bureau meeting back-to-back with the CES plenary session on a trial basis for two years (replacing a 2-day meeting in February).

47. The Bureau briefly discussed the future back-to-back meetings of the OECD Statistics Committee and the Conference. The issue needs further discussion between the Chairs of both committees and the two secretariats.