

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

For discussion and recommendations

Item 2(c) of the Provisional
Agenda

UNECE COMMENTS ON IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY METHODS

Note prepared by the secretariat

1. UNECE welcomes the in-depth review on household survey methods (document ECE/CES/BUR/2011/NOV/4) and agrees on the need to provide more guidance to statistical offices on the related issues. This note summarises the comments that were made in the discussion of the in-depth review paper in the UNECE Statistical Division.
2. The four countries selected for description are all among the most advanced in statistical survey-taking. Indeed, it is necessary to illustrate the best available practice. Additionally, good practice examples of countries at different levels of statistical systems would provide a more realistic reference point to other countries at similar levels. In view of illustrating the efficient use of administrative sources to replace some of the survey data and linking administrative data to surveys, an example from a Nordic country would be helpful.
3. Related to the dissemination of micro-data mentioned in paragraph 31, an important issue would be to address the efforts for the complex and exhaustive quality checks that are needed before release.
4. Section V.G that deals with the integration of household survey data with censuses and administrative data could be expanded to address issues related to confidentiality, because of their critical importance when linking data from different sources. In particular, it would be fruitful to examine experience where the collected data can be used for several different statistics and analyses and to explore ways how to design future data collection in such efficient way.
5. A lot of research on survey methods being carried out in universities and research institutes. It would be necessary to consider the results of such research in establishing ways of improving official statistical surveys.
6. The United Nations Statistics Division is not currently conducting or planning methodological work on updating its manuals on household surveys in the near future. Considering the relatively recent United Nations manual on designing household survey samples from 2008, it seems pertinent that a UNECE task force on household survey methods focuses on other issues than sampling. In focusing the activities, the three major challenges outlined in the review paper could be considered: 1) the effects of declining response rates on cost and quality, 2) the deterioration of telephone frames due to rapid technological changes, and 3) the increasing demands from data users. The United Nations manual *Household Surveys in Developing and Transition Countries* from 2005 would also need to be examined to identify areas that require updating.
7. Based on the discussion at the November 2011 meeting, the terms of reference for such a task force could be presented to the Bureau's approval at the February 2012 meeting.