

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For discussion and
recommendations

Meeting of the 2018/2019 Bureau
Washington, D.C., 28 February – 1 March 2019

Item 3(c) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TASK FORCE ON MEASURING SOCIAL EXCLUSION:
LAUNCH AND PLANNED FIRST STEPS**

Prepared by the Secretariat and the Task Force on measuring social exclusion

In June 2018, the Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Task Force on measuring social exclusion and requested it to report to the Bureau at the early stage of the work in February 2019. The Bureau reviewed the planned first steps of the Task Force presented in this document and provided advice for the future work.

I. BACKGROUND

1. In February 2018, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) conducted an in-depth review on measuring social exclusion led by Statistics Canada and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) (document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/FEB/2). The Bureau asked the UNECE Secretariat together with the Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality, to prepare a proposal for follow up work to address the priority areas raised in the in-depth review for the next CES Bureau meeting.

2. In June 2018, the Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Task Force on Measuring Social Exclusion (document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/JUN/2 annexed to the present note). The Task Force was established with the objective to consolidate current and emerging good practices in measuring social exclusion and in assessing their potential for delivering comparable results. The Bureau asked the Task Force to pay special attention to these aspects of social exclusion that were not addressed under the work on poverty measurement, and report to the Bureau at the early stage of its work.

II. LAUNCH AND FIRST STEPS

3. The Task Force held its first teleconference on 19 December 2018 to initiate the work and agree on first steps. Discussions were based on a briefing note prepared by the Chair (United Kingdom).

4. Task Force members recognised that social exclusion is a broad concept and defining it depends on the context of the country. Countries are very diverse and use a different language to describe concepts that have significant extent of overlap. Moreover, measures on aspects related to social exclusion are often collected under a different label, such as, for example, the “quality of life deprivation index” developed by the Swiss Statistical Office. Full harmonisation of measures or proposing a definition therefore should not be the aim of the Task Force. Collecting countries experience on specific dimensions and aspects of social

exclusion would be a more fruitful approach than identifying a definition and then asking how countries conform to it.

5. The social exclusion measures tend to have both material and non-material dimensions and it would be difficult to separate these dimensions. For example, in considering social exclusion from the neighbourhood perspective, Canada measures the feeling of belonging to the neighbourhood as well as other elements, such as access to employment or median income levels in the neighbourhood. The recently updated list of material deprivation items in EU-SILC also includes social aspects, e.g. the “inability to afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month”. Furthermore, financial means are a crucial factor in measuring social and cultural participation, including going to a cinema, visiting museums, getting together, according to the results based on the 2015 ad-hoc module of EU-SILC. The Task Force would therefore consider the dimension of material well-being while focusing on the role and characteristics of non-material dimensions of social exclusion that countries use.

6. As the first activity, the Task Force will **collect information on the practices of measuring social exclusion**, considering that relevant measurements are not always labelled as measures of social exclusion. The activity will build on the questionnaire Statistics Canada used in data collection for the in-depth review. The issues addressed in 2018 EU-SILC module on quality of life could be also included, such as satisfaction with the living environment or whether the person feels part of society. The questionnaire will be sent to the countries participating in the Task Force as well as other selected countries with experience in measuring social exclusion.

First steps:

- *The chair together with Canada to prepare a first draft of the questionnaire to collect information on countries' practices of measuring social exclusion, based on evidence from relevant literature together with material from Canada and Eurostat by end January 2019.*
- *The questionnaire to be sent to the Task Force for review in the beginning of February 2019.*
- *The survey to be sent to selected countries (Task Force members and some others) end-February/beginning March 2019.*

7. The Task Force's subsequent activities and their timing are laid out in its terms of reference (document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/JUN/2).

8. The following 13 countries and 4 international organizations are participating in the Task Force: United Kingdom (Chair), Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Canada, Czechia, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United States, Eurostat, OECD, United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, and United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

III. PROPOSAL

9. The Bureau is invited to comment on the approach and direction of work of the Task Force.

ANNEX

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

ECE/CES/BUR/2018/JUN/2
18 June 2018

Meeting of the 2017/2018 Bureau
Geneva, 18 June 2018

Approved

Item 2 of the Provisional
Agenda

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON MEASURING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Prepared by the UNECE Secretariat and the Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality

At its February 2018 meeting, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) conducted an in-depth review on measuring social exclusion. Based on the conclusion of the review, the UNECE Secretariat together with the Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality prepared the present terms of reference for the Task Force on Measuring Social Exclusion. **The Bureau is invited to discuss and approve the terms of reference.**

I. BACKGROUND

10. In February 2018, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) conducted an in-depth review on measuring social exclusion. Statistics Canada and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) prepared a paper summarizing the international activities in this area, which provided the basis for the review (document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/FEB/2). The Bureau asked the UNECE Secretariat together with the Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality, to prepare a proposal for follow up work to address the priority areas raised in the in-depth review for the next CES Bureau meeting.

11. Social exclusion is a broad concept for which no exact or widely accepted definition exists. As the methodology changes based on the definition used, this makes it challenging to quantify the number of people who face social exclusion, or the degree to which people are at risk of social exclusion. While many countries measure different aspects of social exclusion, very few surveys or statistical methods are specifically designed for this. Most numeric measurements of social exclusion rely heavily on methods that measure material and social deprivation, and then interpret an individual's level of social exclusion.

12. The concept of social exclusion is linked to that of poverty and material deprivation, and disentangling them is conceptually challenging. Moreover, social exclusion is generally discussed within the social cohesion and social inclusion framework, which although often used as synonyms, contain important differences. Distinction between these concepts, like social exclusion, social cohesion, material deprivation or multidimensional poverty is relatively nuanced and makes social exclusion complex to communicate.

13. Social exclusion strongly depends on the economic, cultural and policy context in the country. Although full harmonisation of measures should not be the aim, designing and implementing policies for social exclusion requires far more detailed information. It is important to understand the prevalence, persistence and depth of social exclusion, the multiple dimensions in which people could be excluded, and the policies that exist to combat social exclusion in the societies.

14. The traditional measures of exclusion or inclusion are changing with generations. Digitalisation, for example, is bringing a range of new issues and forms of social exclusion. In this context, a life-course perspective is important for measuring and understanding social exclusion.

15. Following the pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first, work is needed on collecting and systematising country experiences on measuring different aspects of social exclusion, and linking them to SDG indicators. A collection of such case studies would allow to better support policymaking in this area. The present terms of reference were developed for carrying out such work. The work would build on existing UNECE networks and expertise in the related area of measuring poverty and inequality.

16. The Bureau is invited to discuss and approve the present terms of reference for the Task Force on Measuring Social Exclusion.

II. MANDATE

17. The Task Force on Measuring Social Exclusion reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period of two years. It will present its full report to the February 2020 meeting of the Bureau. The Task Force will finalise the report based on comments from the CES Bureau and from the consultation among all CES members, prior to submitting the report to the CES 2020 plenary session for endorsement.

18. The Task Force's work will be taken forward under the guidance of the CES Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality.

III. OBJECTIVE

19. The objective of the Task Force is to consolidate current and emerging good practices in measuring social exclusion and in assessing their potential for delivering comparable results.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

20. The Task Force will collect national practices on the following:

- a) Concepts and frameworks for measuring social exclusion on the national level, including factors that lead to social exclusion, and groups of people facing social exclusion.

- b) Indicators used for measuring social exclusion.
- c) Measuring emerging aspects and forms of social exclusion resulting from recent developments in the society, e.g. digitalisation.
- d) Communicating measures of social exclusion.

21. The Task Force will compile a collection of good practices and analyse them. The analysis will aim at the following outputs:

- a) Taxonomy of the use of different concepts related to social exclusion, including social cohesion, social inclusion, poverty and material deprivation.
- b) Identification of good practices in the production, analysis and dissemination of social exclusion measures.
- c) Demonstration of linkages to SDG indicators.

V. TIMETABLE

22. The following timetable is foreseen:

Jun-Aug 2018	Launching the Task Force – identifying the countries and organizations interested to participate in its work
Sep-Nov 2018	Discussion of work plan and defining the scope of national practices to be collected
Dec 2018 – Feb 2019	Collection of information on national practices
March-Aug 2019	Review and analysis of the collected information
Sep-Dec 2019	Discussing and drafting the recommendations and conclusions
Jan 2020	Editing the report, submitting to CES Bureau for review
Feb 2020	Review of the full report by the CES Bureau
Mar-Apr 2020	Electronic consultation among CES members
June 2020	Submitting the report to the CES plenary session for endorsement

VI. METHODS OF WORK

23. The Task Force is expected to work mainly via email and telephone conferences and using a common workspace at the UNECE wiki platform. It will meet once a year back-to-back with the meetings of the UNECE Expert Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

24. The following countries and organizations indicated interest in participating in the Task Force: Canada, Mexico, United Kingdom, and Eurostat. Membership is open to additional countries or organizations. UNECE will provide the secretariat.

25. The Task Force will seek to involve in the group academia, and the custodian agencies responsible for the SDG indicators related to social exclusion to consider SDG monitoring needs.
