

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (virtual), 15-16 October 2020

Item IV(b) of the Provisional
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR THE STEERING GROUP ON MEASURING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY**

Note by the Secretariat

*The UNECE methodological work and expert meetings remain an important tool for strengthening national statistics on poverty and inequality, and ensuring a close coordination at international level in support of SDGs 1 and 10. The role of the Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality is therefore essential to steer CES work in this area, guide national statistical offices and ensure a close cooperation between international partners active in this area. **The Bureau approved the present terms of reference for the Steering Group for the next five years.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of measuring poverty, inequality and vulnerability, in particular its goals 1 ('End poverty in all its forms everywhere') and 10 ('Reduce inequalities within and among countries'). The current issues countries face include the lack of data sources for the calculation and disaggregation of SDG indicators, the need to clarify definitions for a number of indicators and to address the differences between national and international methodologies and definitions as well as to harmonize and standardize data to streamline their collection and processing. The principle of "leaving no one behind" requires capturing the hard-to-reach population, yet another challenge in collecting SDG data. Addressing these challenges of measuring poverty and inequalities requires close cooperation among countries within the statistical community.

2. The risks and threats to meeting the SDG goal of reducing poverty are now increased by the Covid-19 pandemic. The UNECE methodological work and expert meetings remain an important tool for strengthening national statistics on poverty and inequality and ensuring a close coordination at international level in support of SDGs 1 and 10. The role of the Steering Group is therefore essential to steer CES work in this area, guide national statistical offices and ensure a close cooperation between international partners active in this area.

II. MANDATE

3. The Steering Group on Measuring Poverty and Inequality will regularly report to the CES Bureau. The Steering Group will identify priority areas where methodological work could be undertaken. In such cases, after having verified the interest by a sufficient number of CES member countries and the availability of resources, the Steering Group will submit proposals

to the CES Bureau for review and approval. The Terms of Reference are to be reviewed in 2025.

III. OBJECTIVE

4. The objective of the Steering Group will be to provide direction to the CES work on poverty and inequality statistics, advance methodological development, capacity development and collaboration between users and producers of poverty and inequality statistics, and provide a mechanism for following up on the implementation of the CES guidance. The Steering Group should address the additional needs and the new data requirements on measuring poverty and inequality during the pandemic and its aftermath, taking aboard both monetary and non-monetary aspects.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

5. The following activities and outputs are planned:

(a) Take forward methodological work on measuring poverty and inequality, and set priorities in this area taking into account the challenges in producing indicators for monitoring of the 2030 Agenda under the new pandemic circumstances; Focus on timely provision of statistics and sharing best practices would help government's policy response to COVID-19, especially in building back better their social protection, social security and employment policies as well as addressing pressing needs of vulnerable population (SDGs 1, 8, and 10).

(b) Follow up on the implementation of the CES *Guide on Poverty Measurement* and *Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation* and the progress of countries in measuring poverty and inequalities; The Steering Group will continue to direct the research agenda considering the social and economic implications as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis.

(c) Organize the UNECE expert meetings on measuring poverty and inequality; elaborate proposals for topics and solicit session organizers and discussants;

(d) Advise the UNECE Secretariat on the planning of capacity development activities in the area of poverty and inequality statistics to support the statistical systems in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

6. The Steering Group will ensure coordination of the CES work on poverty and inequality statistics with Eurostat, OECD, the World Bank and the leading research group of Oxford University on poverty measurement (OPHI), the EU-SILC Network on income and living conditions (NetSILC), other relevant bodies and with current developments related to the monitoring of poverty under the Sustainable Development Goals.

V. METHOD OF WORK

7. The Steering Group will work mainly via e-mail consultations and video conferences. The Group will also have face-to-face meetings in conjunction with the annual UNECE expert meetings on poverty and inequality statistics.

VI. MEMBERSHIP

8. The following countries and organizations are participating in the Steering Group: Austria, Canada, Italy, Poland, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, OECD, Oxford University (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative - OPHI), United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, and the World Bank, thus covering the different sub-regions in the UNECE. If necessary, other experts and agencies can also be consulted or asked to contribute, to consolidate the best available expertise.

9. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Steering Group.

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