

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (online), 17-18 February 2021

Item III (c) of the Provisional
Agenda

**WORK PLAN FOR DEVELOPING THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN
STATISTICIANS RECOMMENDATIONS ON POPULATION AND HOUSING
CENSUSES FOR THE 2030 ROUND**

Note by the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses

This note contains the work plan for developing the 'CES Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses for the 2030 Round', prepared by the CES Steering Group (chaired by the Netherlands). The plan is designed to lead to the endorsement of the Recommendations at the 2025 CES plenary session, which follows the globally agreed ten-year cycle of population and housing censuses. The plan outlines the principal strands and thematic areas of the work and foresees a survey of national practices with censuses of the current 2020 round.

The Bureau reviewed and approved the work plan.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Every ten years the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) issues a set of recommendations to guide countries in conducting their population and housing censuses. The Recommendations are developed by a number of Task Forces, overseen by the CES Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses¹. The work is done in close cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat). The regional recommendations complement those made at the global level in the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* and are designed to align with the priorities and regulations of Eurostat concerning censuses in the European Union countries.

2. The next revision of the *CES Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses* is due to be published in 2025, to guide countries in preparing and conducting censuses of the 2030 round. The ever-increasing pace of change in technology, techniques for collecting and processing data, available data sources, user demand and public perceptions means that some areas of the *Recommendations* will need to be revised, and there may be a need for some areas to be added, expanded upon, or reduced.

3. Furthermore, as described in *Keeping Count: conducting the 2020 round of population and housing censuses during the Covid-19 pandemic*, the pandemic has made its impacts felt in offices responsible for conducting censuses across the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region. With the benefit of hindsight, some countries may feel that they were not ideally prepared for the challenges presented by the pandemic. Countries have expressed a need

¹ Armenia, Belarus, Canada, France, Georgia, Italy, the Netherlands (Chair), Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, CIS-Stat, EFTA, Eurostat, UNFPA and UNSD

for expanded guidance in the *2030 Recommendations* on emergency preparedness and contingency planning, as well as additional support for moving towards census approaches that are more resilient to external shocks, such as register-based censuses or increased use of administrative data in conducting combined or traditional censuses.

4. This work plan, prepared at the request of the CES Bureau (see [ECE/CES/2020/14/Add.16](#)) sets out the high-level timetable for preparing the *2030 Recommendations*, with a view to their endorsement by CES in June 2025.

II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

5. A variety of sources have informed the Steering Group's identification of areas requiring revision for the *2030 Recommendations*:

(a) The Steering Group's analytical report, *New frontiers for censuses beyond 2020*, endorsed by CES and published in 2020, which combined findings from a September 2018 survey of member States about their views on the future of censuses with expert contributions from the Steering Group. The report put forward a set of recommendations for issues to be considered in preparing the *2030 Recommendations*;

(b) The results of a survey of member States conducted in November 2020, which gathered basic information both on practices in the 2020 round and impacts of the Covid pandemic on censuses of the 2020 round;

(c) [The report prepared for the Steering Group](#), analyzing the results of the 2020 survey and the information presented by participants in the [2020 UNECE online expert meeting on population and housing censuses](#);

(d) The [UNECE Census wiki](#), which contains summary information about practices used in the 2010 and 2020 rounds and therefore indicates the trends taking place across the region.

III. WORK PLAN

6. At least 14 countries in the ECE region have, at the time of writing of this report, changed their planned census reference date for the 2020 round as a result of the Covid pandemic. Therefore while the goal is to publish the *2030 Recommendations* by 2025, the activities and interim milestones will need to take these delays into account and will therefore begin later than has been the case in previous cycles.

7. The principal strands of work to be conducted and approximate timings are:

(a) **Establishment of thematic task forces to revise selected parts of the *Recommendations*.** Thirteen thematic areas have provisionally been identified based on the sources described in section II. Each task force will be composed of and chaired by national experts, with secretariat support provided by UNECE. The task forces will help design the relevant sections of the survey of national practices (see item (b) below); analyze the survey results and prepare and present analyses based on these results to the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses; and prepare revised material for the *2030 Recommendations*. Terms of reference for the task forces will be developed in 2021; members and chairs will be identified during 2022 so that the task forces can begin their work in the first half of 2023;

(b) **Survey of national practices in the 2020 round** once the majority of the region's censuses have been completed. Given the delays in some countries' censuses as a result

of the Covid pandemic, it would be appropriate to conduct this survey in 2023 rather than earlier as was the case in previous cycles, to ensure that all countries have the opportunity to complete it and share their experiences. The survey will be designed and tested during the first half of 2023;

(c) **Review of survey results and of task forces' drafts by the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses.** Review by experts from across the region is indispensable to ensure region-wide agreement on and ownership of the content of the proposed revisions. There will be opportunities to present and discuss the content of the survey in September/October 2023, and the resulting task force reports and draft revisions of the *Recommendations* in September/October 2024. (Should it be impossible for such in-person meetings to take place, opportunities to present and debate the work will be provided by other means, such as online meetings and/or consultations.)

(d) **Consolidation into a full revised edition of the 2030 Recommendations.** In order to remain valuable to countries in planning their censuses, the *2030 Recommendations* should be **published** in 2025. They should therefore be presented to the plenary session of CES in June 2025 for endorsement. This will entail processing of feedback from the 2024 Expert Group Meeting; approval by the CES Bureau in February 2025; consultation among CES members in March-April 2025; revision and editing by June 2025.

IV. FURTHER DETAILS ON ACTIVITIES

A. Thematic task forces

8. The following themes have been identified as likely thematic areas for task forces. The Steering Group notes that the final list of task forces will depend both on availability of experts from countries to participate in each, including volunteers to chair them, and on possible changes in circumstances in the coming years. It is therefore recognized that this list is subject to change. The numbers in brackets indicate the numbers of respondents to the November 2020 survey who indicated that they or a representative of their office would in principle be willing to serve as a member of such a task force (it was emphasized in the survey that such indication did not constitute a formal commitment). These numbers can therefore be interpreted as an approximate indication of the degree of perceived importance of these themes among member States. Those without a number in brackets were proposed subsequently by the Steering Group.

- (a) Emergency preparedness and contingency planning (10)
- (b) Quality assessment and quality management (14)
- (c) Enumeration methods (16)
- (d) Technology (11)
- (e) Population concepts and related definitions (21)
- (f) Economic characteristics (7)
- (g) Migration (national & international) (13)
- (h) Household & family characteristics (17)
- (i) Sex, gender and gender identity (6)
- (j) Housing topics (13)
- (k) Geocoding and georeferencing of census statistics and production of small area statistics

(l) Dissemination of disaggregated census data

(m) Communication and outreach.

9. The Steering Group notes the potential for overlap in content between these topic areas, which will necessitate close coordination by the secretariat to avoid either duplication of effort or omissions. A mapping exercise of all census variables to task forces will be undertaken to ensure that every variable is assigned to a task force.

10. The Steering Group also notes the need for inclusion in many of the task forces of subject-matter experts working outside of the census field.

11. Areas that are cross-cutting in nature and that may need to be examined by several of the task forces include considerations of mode effects and the use of multiple modes; the use of estimation approaches; combining statistical and geospatial data; and expanding guidance on the use of new unstructured data sources.

12. Several specific issues have been noted that should be included in the work of the task forces. These include defining secondary residence; defining criteria to identify and differentiate dwellings that are used regularly but not permanently; improving definitions of pendulum migration; and guidance on integrating frequent inter-censal estimates into a census system.

13. Some interest has also been expressed by countries in adding to the *Recommendations* guidance on ensuring legislative support for censuses (including for obtaining access to administrative data sources and for establishing bilateral agreements for data exchange); managing transitions from traditional to combined or register-based censuses; and managing public and stakeholder support and trust including to maintain financial support. These issues could be tackled with reference to existing ECE guidance on these and related topics.

B. Survey of national practices

14. The Steering Group will determine the high-level structure of the survey with the help of the task forces. A further task force will then be established to design the survey in detail, build it using appropriate online software, and pilot test it. This will be done in collaboration with UNSD and Eurostat to avoid duplication of effort with these organizations.

15. The principal purpose of the survey will be to obtain detailed information about census organization and management of the completed censuses of the 2020 round: how each country conducted its census, processed and disseminated results, challenges encountered, lessons learned, successes, costs, etc. The survey will also gather information on the topics covered in the censuses and the degree of compliance with the *CES 2020 Recommendations*, bearing in mind that not all such information can easily be gleaned from publicly available census forms or reports from all countries. The survey may also touch briefly on plans for future censuses. The information gathered in the survey will enable the task forces to target their revisions of the 2030 Recommendations appropriately taking into account the needs and experiences of member States.

16. The survey will be based to a great extent on that used in 2012-2013, which was subject to detailed development and testing. It will be reviewed in light of changes in census practices and priorities and improvements in the available software for hosting the survey.

V. SUMMARY

17. The table below summarizes the planned timing of the proposed activities:

March-September 2021	Determine final list and develop terms of reference (TORs) for task forces in consultation with community of census experts
October 2021	CES Bureau approves task force TORs
2022	Identify chairs and members of task forces; task forces develop own detailed work plans
January-June 2023	Design and test survey of national practices
July-September 2023	Finalize and conduct survey among member States
October 2023	Report first observations to UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses
October 2023 – August 2024	Task forces analyze survey results; produce studies of findings; and draft proposed revisions for corresponding sections of <i>Recommendations</i>
September 2024	Present task forces' reports and draft revisions of <i>Recommendations</i> at UNECE-Eurostat Expert Meeting on Censuses
October-December 2024	Revise drafts based on discussion at the Expert Meeting
December 2024	Submit final draft of <i>Recommendations</i> for review by the CES Bureau
February 2025	CES Bureau reviews draft <i>Recommendations</i>
Feb-Mar 2025	Consultation among all CES member States;
April 2025	Revise according to feedback from consultation
May 2025	Submit final draft to CES plenary session for endorsement (June 2025)

18. The Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses will oversee the activities listed above and provide advice and guidance to the task forces.

19. The Steering Group will report to the CES Bureau on the progress of this work plan annually.

VI. PROPOSAL TO THE CES BUREAU

20. The Bureau is invited to review and approve the present work plan.