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**UNITED NATIONS**  
**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS  
**UNECE Workshop on Measuring Poverty in Pandemic Times**  
Online, 25-26 March 2021

## CONCEPT NOTE

### I. TIME AND VENUE

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is organising the *Workshop on Measuring Poverty in Pandemic Times* online on Thursday, 25 March 2021 and Friday, 26 March 2021 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon Central European Time (Geneva time).

### II. PURPOSE

2. The Workshop's objective is to provide hands-on training and address the capacity-building needs expressed by countries on adapting their surveys. It also aims to better respond to the increased demands for more disaggregated data during the pandemic.

3. The principal target audience are statisticians, researchers and analysts from national statistical offices (NSOs), ministries and other government agencies who produce poverty statistics in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. To allow for productive discussions, the Workshop participants should be familiar with poverty statistics and household surveys.

4. The workshop is part of the United Nations Development Account (10<sup>th</sup> tranche) programme "Data and statistics".

### III. PROGRAMME

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#### **Day 1: Training on new approaches, methods and good practices of survey-taking in the pandemic context**

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Thursday 25 March, 10:00-12:00 CET (Geneva time)

*UNECE aims to address the new needs for capacity-building and support national statistical offices in their quick response to the pandemic in adapting their surveys.*

5. In July 2020, UNECE took first steps in gathering practices of national statistical offices in adapting their household surveys to the COVID-19 crisis situation with respect to poverty measurement. The [study](#), available in English and Russian, covered 25 national statistical offices participating in the UNECE work on poverty measurement. In some countries, surveys were postponed or cancelled, while the large majority (91%) of those who did take the surveys switched from face-to-face interviews to remote survey methods. About half of countries covered in the study indicated they altered existing questionnaires or developed new questions or modules to capture impacts of COVID-19 on households and individuals. The statistical offices in the region cited limited technical skills and equipment among survey respondents, staff health, and funding limitations as the main challenges associated with conducting surveys in this new environment.

#### **Session A: Social surveys response to Covid-19: example of the United Kingdom**

6. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for many of the large household and social surveys in the United Kingdom that provide a range of vital statistics to policy makers and to the general public. This includes financial surveys used to measure household income and its distribution across the population. In this session, ONS will provide information about their activities and steps they have taken to ensure the continuation of data collection operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. They will also highlight some of the ongoing challenges and issues they are facing for their data collection. There will be opportunities for participants to exchange ideas and discuss the various data collection approaches and challenges experienced in their respective countries.

#### **Session B: Training interviewers in new methods and techniques in remote work conditions**

7. The work of ONS's field interviewers has changed drastically since the start of the pandemic as interviewers had to adapt to working in a socially distanced world.

8. ONS will share how data collection has changed from face-to-face to telephone interviewing during the pandemic. They will provide an overview of the ONS 'Knock-to-Nudge' initiative, where interviewers knock and nudge respondents to provide a telephone number or book an appointment for an interview at the doorstep. They will outline how interviewers were virtually briefed for the telephone mode and how the Knock-to-Nudge initiative is rolled out to over 600 field staff. Participants of the session are invited to give an update on how the work of interviewers in their countries have changed during the pandemic.

### **Session C: Methods to improve respondent engagement in online surveys**

9. ONS has conducted extensive research into transforming NSO surveys for online and telephone modes. They have taken a flexible and responsive approach to adapting their survey designs and respondent engagement strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this session, they will highlight key methods and best practice in development of questionnaire and materials for telephone and online surveys. They will also cover their approach to identifying and engaging with 'hard to reach' groups.

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### **Day 2: Disaggregated data to assess the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable**

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Friday 26 March, 10:00-12:00 CET (Geneva time)

*UNECE aims to support countries in implementation of selected recommendations from the [Poverty measurement: Guide to data disaggregation](#) and help respond to the stronger demands for more disaggregated data to assess the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable.*

10. The call for more disaggregated and internationally comparable poverty measures remains strong in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In January 2021, UNECE has published a new Guide, [Poverty measurement: Guide to data disaggregation](#). The Guide was developed by a UNECE Task Force of 30 statistical experts from member countries and international organizations led by Statistics Austria. The Guide is designed to improve methodologies to help identify disadvantaged or vulnerable members of society, who often experience the highest levels of poverty. The recommended priority types of disaggregation cover, among others, age, sex, disability status, migratory status and ethnicity. The Guide also addresses methodological challenges and helps improve the quality and comparability of poverty measures, examining topics such as the measurement of intra-household sharing of resources, medical expenditures related to disability, housing wealth, imputed rent, social transfers in kind, and others. It pays special attention to assessing and improving survey methods, including for hard-to-reach groups and populations living in institutions. The Guide builds on the 2017 UNECE [Guide on Poverty Measurement](#).

## Session D: Adapting household surveys for better measurement of poverty in the context of the pandemic

11. Following a 3-year project, in 2019, the UNECE Harmonized Survey Module for Poverty Measurement was finalized and made available [online](#). The module has been designed to provide a **model set of survey questions** to address the essential needs for poverty measurement, including those necessary for producing disaggregation poverty data for monitoring SDGs. Further work has been recently undertaken to adapt the existing model set of survey questions for measuring poverty to the current pandemic circumstances. The updated model set will help countries to carry out their household budget surveys in the pandemic situation. The countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia are encouraged to review and apply the updated model set while taking into account the national specificities.

## Session E: Application of recommendations of [Poverty measurement: Guide to data disaggregation](#)

12. Three concrete recommendations of the newly published [Poverty measurement: Guide to data disaggregation](#) will take a centre stage in this training event:

- *Coverage of sampling frames (Recommendation 3)*

13. Coverage of sampling frames is paramount for disaggregation. What can be done in practice to assess and improve coverage for groups, which are difficult to reach through a conventional sample survey? EU's Fundamental Rights Agency will present innovative approaches put into practice by various EU Member States. Together, the participants shall reflect on the more general methodological lessons learnt for enumerating members of minorities, which are defined by ethnicity.

- *Tailored data collection modes, online and mixed modes design (Recommendation 9)*

14. Disaggregation may also require tailored data collection modes. At the same time, survey mode decisions may be driven by cost considerations. Survey participation can therefore vary across groups and between survey modes. Today, EU-Member States are struggling with how to use mixed mode designs effectively. Statistics Austria will present the reasons why and how its office is gradually moving towards a mobile first data collection strategy.

- *Non-response adjustment and calibration of weights (Recommendation 17)*

15. Two freely available practical software tools will be presented, which could help to optimise survey designs and enhance precision especially with regard to the disaggregation of poverty measurement:

a) Statistics Netherlands will present the R-indicator, which summarises the variation of nonresponse rates between groups. These metrics are designed to compare surveys and to assist in the construction of adaptive survey designs.

b) Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic will demonstrate how the CALIF calibration tool makes it easy to adjust weights. As a result, the weighted frequency of potentially misrepresented regions or groups matches external controls while respecting reasonable limits for such adjustments.

#### **IV. PREPARATION**

16. The event will consist of short presentations, group work and facilitated discussions. The delegates from your office will be invited to fill in a short questionnaire prior to the meeting to ensure better understanding of the situation in their country. All meeting documents will be loaded on the [Workshop website](#).

#### **V. LANGUAGES**

17. The working languages of the Workshop are English and Russian. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in these languages.

#### **VI. REGISTRATION**

18. Representatives from your organization who wish to participate in the online training are invited to complete [the online registration form](#) by **Friday, 5 March 2021**.

#### **VII. INFORMATION AND CORRESPONDENCE**

19. The UNECE Secretariat is available to respond to inquiries and provide additional information.

#### **UNECE Secretariat**

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