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Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2020
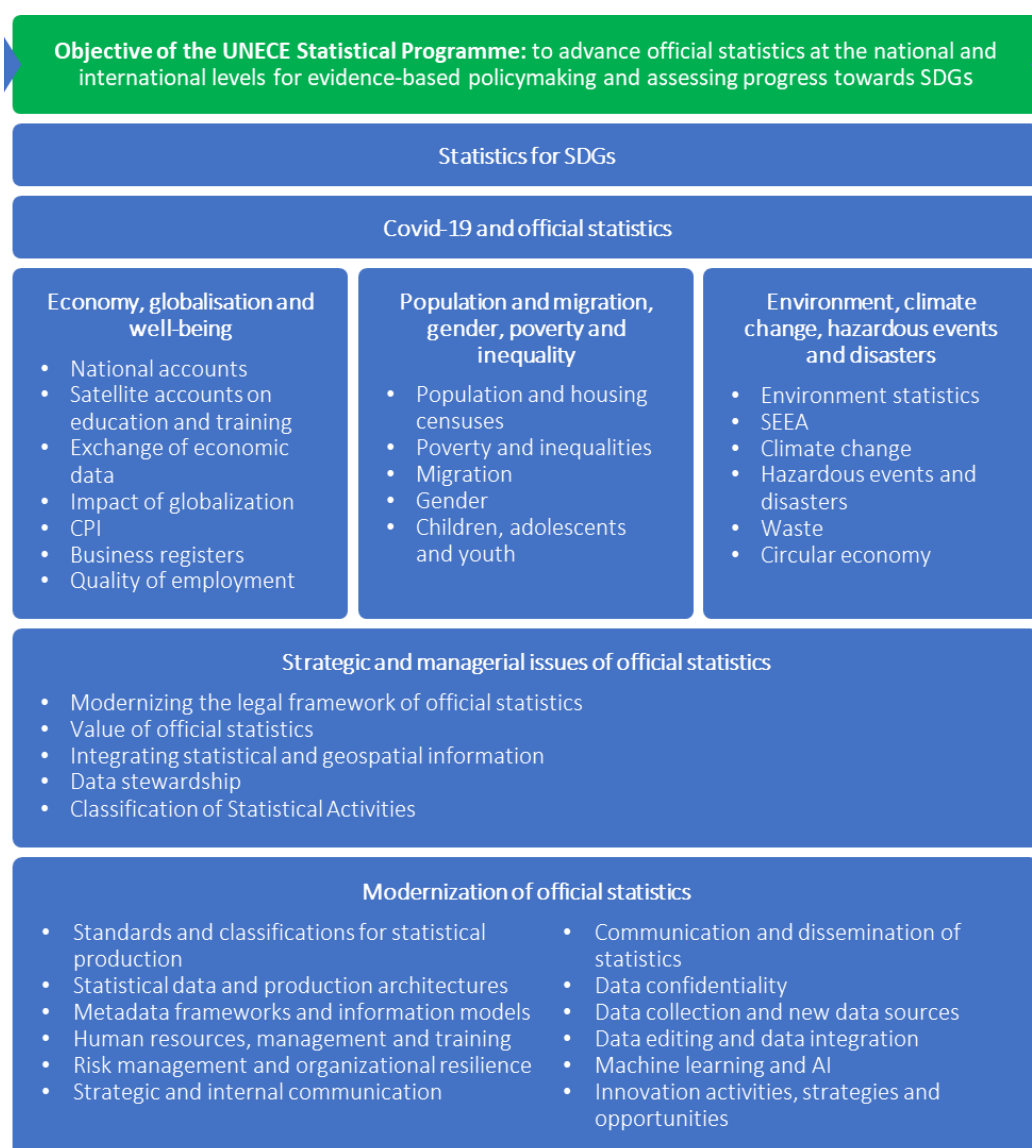
Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

　　The document provides a short summary of the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2020. The document is submitted to the Conference for approval.

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1.   The objective of the UNECE statistical sub-programme is "to advance official statistics at the national and international levels for evidence-based policymaking and assessing progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to ensure the coordination of statistical activities in the ECE region under the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)".

2.   The work is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians and focuses on the priorities set by member States. The Conference consists of the Heads of the national statistical organizations (NSOs) in the UNECE region and the OECD member countries. Other countries outside the region, such as Brazil, China, Mongolia and South Africa also actively participate in the work of the Conference.

3.   The Statistical Division acts as secretariat for CES. It works in close collaboration with international organizations active in statistics in the region, such as the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The Chief Statisticians of these organizations participate in the CES Bureau to ensure coordination of work and avoid duplication. The international and regional organizations which contributed to the work of the CES in 2020 are presented in section III.

4.   The work also responds to the global initiatives of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), which sets the global statistical standards.

5.   All UNECE statistical work is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since it supports member States in measuring and communicating progress towards the 2030 Agenda. This is in accordance with the Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring SDGs, adopted by CES in 2015.

Figure
UNECE Statistical Programme – objective and areas of work

Objective of the UNECE Statistical Programme: to advance official statistics at the national and international levels for evidence-based policymaking and assessing progress towards SDGs

Statistics for SDGs

Covid-19 and official statistics

Economy, globalisation and well-being
- National accounts
- Satellite accounts on education and training
- Exchange of economic data
- Impact of globalization
- CPI
- Business registers
- Quality of employment

Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality
- Population and housing censuses
- Poverty and inequalities
- Migration
- Gender
- Children, adolescents and youth

Environment, climate change, hazardous events and disasters
- Environment statistics
- SEEA
- Climate change
- Hazardous events and disasters
- Waste
- Circular economy

Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics
- Modernizing the legal framework of official statistics
- Value of official statistics
- Integrating statistical and geospatial information
- Data stewardship
- Classification of Statistical Activities

Modernization of official statistics
- Standards and classifications for statistical production
- Statistical data and production architectures
- Metadata frameworks and information models
- Human resources, management and training
- Risk management and organizational resilience
- Strategic and internal communication
- Communication and dissemination of statistics
- Data confidentiality
- Data collection and new data sources
- Data editing and data integration
- Machine learning and AI
- Innovation activities, strategies and opportunities

A.   Covid-19 impact and response

6.   The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the work of NSOs, which have faced greatly increased demand for statistics to manage the pandemic and its impacts, combined with unprecedented obstacles to collecting data and producing statistics. NSOs have risen to this challenge showcasing the value of official statistics and delivering under difficult circumstances. In many statistical offices the pandemic has become an accelerator of innovation to maintain business continuity in the exceptional circumstances.

7.   The pandemic has affected all areas of statistics and activated related to Covid-19 response cut across all UNECE work areas, focusing on innovation and building resilience of the statistical systems. All expert meetings and capacity development activities held since the pandemic broke out have addressed the impact of Covid-19 in their thematic area. In addition, several dedicated webinars were organized to share experience, increase capacity and knowledge on:

(a)   Providing statistics and geostatistical data for managing the pandemic;

(b) Data collection, dissemination and communication in the conditions of the pandemic, including a series of webinars on producing consumer price indices under lockdown;

(c) Related human resources management and training issues;

(d) Role of national statistical offices in the changing world and business continuity of official statistics – discussed in a joint informal session of CES and OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy on 24 June.

8. To support statistical production in the face of the crisis, UNECE has developed a wiki platform on Covid-19 and official statistics to guide statistical producers to existing and newly developed resources from UNECE and partners. The platform offers a space for national statistical offices and international organizations to share experiences and developments. It contains resources both on new statistical needs to support countries in managing the crisis, and on emergency measures to ensure continuity of statistical production in core areas of economic, social and demographic statistics such as national accounts, consumer prices, population censuses and household surveys.

9. CES has also changed its working methods to cope with the increased operational uncertainty. Physical meetings and workshops have been replaced by hybrid and online meetings and adapted to the new format in terms of content, preparation and duration, and by taking advantage of the technology.

II. Description of the main accomplishments in 2020

A. Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

10. In 2020, the Bureau of the Conference reviewed in-depth three statistical areas with the purpose of addressing emerging issues, improving inter-agency coordination and eliminating overlaps and gaps in statistical activities undertaken by various international organizations in the UNECE region. These reviews have led to the development of practical recommendations for countries to address the emerging challenges. The following reviews were undertaken: (i) measuring well-being in the era of the "digital society", (ii) role of the statistical community in climate action, and (iii) measuring circular economy. All in-depth review papers are available on the UNECE website.

11. Integrating statistical and geospatial data, particularly in the context of statistics for SDGs, has increasing importance. UNECE has developed a closer partnership between the statistical and geospatial communities in the region. on 23 June 2020, the first joint plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians and UN-GGIM: Europe took place. The session discussed new roles for statistical and geospatial agencies in emerging national data ecosystems and areas for future work, and supported the renewal of the collaboration agreement between the secretariats of UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE for 2021-2023.

B. Methodological work

12. The work of the UNECE Statistical Division is fully aligned with SDGs, facilitating country-led reporting of statistics for SDGs in two main ways.

13. First, UNECE is supporting national statistical offices as providers and national coordinators of statistics on SDGs, by providing guidance and a number of practical tools to facilitate its implementation. In 2020, the Second *Edition of the CES Road Map on statistic*s for SDGs was finalized and will be submitted to the 2021 CES plenary session for endorsement. By end of 2020, 41 countries in the ECE region set up their national reporting platforms. In 2020, UNECE launched its regional platform on statistics for SDGs, consisting of a knowledge hub and a dashboard and database of selected SDG indicators. The purpose of the platform is to communicate developments on measuring SDGs in the UNECE region, provide easy access to up-to-date indicators on implementing SDGs, and to disseminate data

and metadata. Moreover, the first report *Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the UNECE Region* was prepared for the 2020 session of UNECE Commission.

14. Second, the Statistical Division undertakes methodological work and national statistical capacity development to inform policy decisions for the achievement of SDGs through work on demographic, social, economic, and environment statistics.

15. In 2020, CES endorsed seven statistical guidelines and recommendations, developed by dedicated teams of specialists. These teams of specialists are set up by CES for a particular task with concrete terms of reference, timeframe, output and a sunset clause. All the statistical guidelines and recommendations are prepared in close collaboration with main international partners, in particular Eurostat, OECD, IMF and UN/DESA. All guidelines and recommendations are available on the UNECE website. The following guidelines were finalised in 2020:

- *Guide to sharing of economic data* aims to facilitate exchange and sharing of economic data to ensure correct measurement of global production and provide meaningful data on activities of multinational enterprises. It analyses concrete examples of data exchange, identifies obstacles and provides guidance, tools and principles to overcome the barriers to data sharing;

- *CES set of core climate change-related indicators and statistics using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting* (version 2.0) and its implementation guidelines include 44 climate change-related indicators recommended for implementation in the region, describe the selection criteria for the indicators and the underlying statistics and SEEA accounts, and guide countries in establishing their national sets of climate change-related indicators;

- *Poverty measurement: guide to data disaggregation* consolidates current and emerging good practices in disaggregating poverty indicators and in assessing their robustness, and provides recommendations to statistical offices for the production, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated poverty measures;

- *New frontiers for censuses beyond 2020* offer an in-depth analysis of the future of population and housing censuses after the 2020 round, which will inform the recommendations for the 2030 round of censuses;

- *Recommendations on measuring intra-household power and decision-making* make an inventory of existing indicators and sources, and provide recommendations to statistical offices for measuring the gendered dimensions of intra-household power and decision-making;

- *Guidance on communicating gender statistics* assists national statistical offices in communicating to policymakers and the public on six key themes: gender pay gap, gender-based violence, the language of gender in statistical communication, maintaining impartiality when communicating gender statistics, interacting with users of gender statistics, and addressing data gaps in gender statistics;

- *Guidance on the use of longitudinal data for migration statistics* shows how longitudinal data could be developed and used for international migration statistics, and proposes key longitudinal indicators related to the study of international migration and best practices for dissemination.

16. The Conference of European Statisticians also endorsed a new version of the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) developed under the CES High-level Group for the Modernization of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS). Alongside other models developed under HLG-MOS, GSIM provides a universal language that allows statistical offices to develop common tools using the same reference framework.

17. In 2020, UNECE Task Forces finished the work on the following four statistical guidelines for submission to the 2021 CES plenary session for endorsement:

- Framework on waste statistics proposes a conceptual framework to harmonize international waste statistics, and provide better information needed for managing waste and monitoring implementation of important waste-related policy frameworks

- Guidelines on Assessing the Quality of Administrative Sources for Use in Censuses provides the producers of population and housing censuses with guidance on how to assess the quality of administrative data for use in the census.

- The second edition of the Road Map for Statistics on SDGs guides members of national statistical systems and other stakeholders on measuring the achievement of the SDGs goals and targets, taking into account the new challenges and developments in this area. The second edition of the Road Map builds on the first edition from 2017, which has been widely used by countries and international organizations and others.

- Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion consolidates current and emerging good practices in measuring social exclusion and in assessing their potential for delivering comparable results.

18. UNECE developed these in cooperation with countries and the following partner organizations: Basel Convention Secretariat, CISSTAT, Eurostat, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), International Solid Waste Association, OECD, PARIS 21, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Habitat, UNSD, United Nations University, University of Leeds, and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.

19. Under the auspices of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) two priority projects were carried out in 2020: the second phase of the Machine Learning project and the Input Privacy Preservation project. The outputs of the Machine Learning project including the main report with recommendations on how to advance the use of machine learning in statistical organizations, reports on the three work packages and accompanying materials (codes, data) are available on the UNECE Statistics Wiki. The Input Privacy Preservation will continue in 2021. These projects are in addition to the activities of the core sub-groups on Supporting Standards, Sharing Tools, Capacities and Communication, and the Blues Skies Thinking Network. The HLG-MOS also launched a promotional video to better explain its role and mandate.

C. Capacity development

20. UNECE aims to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems in all member countries, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to implement international standards and guidelines and to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The capacity development is directly related to SDG 17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development", in particular targets 17.18 and 17.19.

21. UNECE capacity development activities include:

- Assessments of national statistical systems

- Capacity development workshops

- Advisory services to address country-specific needs

- Development of methodological guidance, survey tools and training material

- In-country capacity development projects.

22. In line with *UNECE Statistical Capacity Development Strategy* endorsed by CES in 2018, capacity development activities are demand driven. The activities are carried out in partnership with other international organizations, in particular with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNSD, Eurostat, EFTA, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, CIS-STAT and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

23. Jointly with Eurostat and EFTA, UNECE carries out Global Assessments at the request of countries. Global Assessments analyze progress of countries with developing statistical systems in implementing international standards and compliance with the *Fundamental*

Principles of Official Statistics. In 2020, UNECE has carried out the first stage of a Global Assessment of the National Statistical System of Kyrgyzstan, as well as various on-line training workshops and webinars for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. During the year, capacity development funds have been re-focused to Covid-resilient activities, including in-country capacity development projects in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Serbia to support national responses to the pandemic.

24.   Statistical capacity development activities contributed to progress in areas identified for improvement in assessments of national statistical systems. These assessments analyze the progress of countries with developing statistical systems in implementing international standards and the degree of compliance with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. They are carried out at countries' request jointly with Eurostat and EFTA.

25. To address member States' requests for assistance in implementing CES recommendations, including the *Roadmap on Statistics for SDGs*, UNECE is carrying out a UNDA-funded "Programme on statistics and data to build countries' capacity for monitoring progress towards SDGs". This programme will end in 2021, and UNECE, in collaboration with the other regional commissions and UN-DESA is preparing a follow-up to start in 2022.

26.   UNECE is also implementing externally funded projects. One example is a project funded by the World Bank to "enhance coherence and integration of economic and social statistics in support of the implementation of 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA)". A second example is a project funded by the Russian Federation to support the CIS countries to provide high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, with a special emphasis on environment statistics.

D.   UNECE statistical database

27.   UNECE operates a statistical database offering key statistics on member countries via free online interfaces in English and Russian. This work promotes open access to, and use of, data for evidence-based decision making, as requested in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The statistical database is available at: https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en, providing:

- Macroeconomic data (national accounts main aggregates, industrial production, labour force, wages, price indices, purchasing power parities, exchange rates, and globalization indicators)

- Social and demographic data with gender breakdown (population, fertility, families and households, work and the economy, education, public life and decision making, health and mortality, crime and violence, science and ICT, and life balance)

- Transport and forestry statistics provided by other UNECE Divisions

- Clearinghouse for migration statistics for the CIS countries

- Country overview tables and tables with a country ranking and country profiles, charts and maps.

28.   The compilation of data on these topics gives insights into measurement issues and helps to identify priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and to provide targeted support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

29.   In 2020, the SDG dashboard was launched. The dashboard provides quickly and easily information on the UNECE countries' progress in achieving SDGs to a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats. The data are stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata.

30.   The database provides the source data for publications such as the report for the annual UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, *UNECE Countries in Figures*, as well as for preparing regular short articles on economic and social development in the UNECE

region, published in the UNECE Weekly newsletter and on the UNECE website. Annual user surveys are conducted to ensure relevance and to identify new user needs.

31. The UNECE statistical database is also used to disseminate data for UNECE policy work. In this respect, the database is a strategic resource for the whole UNECE and beyond.

E. Websites and wikis maintained by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Division

32. The UNECE Statistical Division's website (https://unece.org/statistics) provides information about the Division's work and includes links to final products and other materials. These links include:

- Knowledge Hub on SDGs: https://w3.unece.org/sdghub/

- Online statistical profiles of UNECE countries in publication format, linked to the database: https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en/PDFCountryProfiles

- Gender statistics website with multimedia training videos: https://unece.org/statistics/gender-statistics

- Library of training materials on statistics: www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/train

- Links to official statistical organizations: https://unece.org/statistics/partners

33. In addition to the website, the Statistical Division maintains a collaborative Wiki platform for experts to communicate with one another and to share knowledge and tools. The Statistical Division has currently almost 100 wiki spaces with more than 2000 active users. All the wikis and knowledge bases on different subjects can be found at: https://statswiki.unece.org.

III. Cooperation with other organizations

34. UNECE maintains very good cooperation and close working contacts with the other international organizations active in statistics in the UNECE region. Eurostat, OECD, CIS-STAT, IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division of DESA are permanent observers in the CES Bureau. Most activities and methodological work are undertaken jointly with Eurostat and OECD allowing efficient use of resources, avoiding duplication of effort, and ensuring that all countries of the region benefit from the ongoing international statistical work in emerging areas.

35. Many international organizations contributed to the work of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2020. The cooperation takes the form of joint meetings, joint capacity development projects or activities, partnership in developing recommendations and guidelines, and contribution to the work of the CES task forces. In addition to the organizations that are members of the CES Bureau, the following partners can be mentioned:

A. United Nations organizations

- All UN Regional Commissions: the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) – developing statistical capacity across all statistical domains, including climate change, hazardous events and disasters, SDG-related indicators and economic statistics; sharing of common approaches and methodologies in measuring progress towards SDGs

- International Labour Organization (ILO) – measuring quality of employment and ensuring that economic and social statistics align with labour-related international standards and definitions; development and integration of standards for modernization of official statistics

- UN-Women – capacity development in gender statistics and gathering harmonized statistics for the SDG indicator on gender equality in local government

- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – collaborating on statistics on gender in trade and use of new data sources

- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) – providing statistics for hazardous events and disasters

- United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe) – collaborating to align geospatial and statistical standards and initiatives

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – capacity development activities to help countries produce environment-related SDG indicators and co-chairing the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia, bringing together data and statistics focal points from regional bodies and UN Country Teams

- UN Climate Change (the UNFCCC secretariat), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and improving climate change-related statistics

- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – long-standing support for UNECE work on population and housing censuses

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – work on statistics on children and youth.

36.   As part of a United Nations Development Account project coordinated by UNDESA, UNECE works alongside nine other United Nations entities (UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the four other Regional Commissions – ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA) to develop statistics and data for SDGs, and measure the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on vulnerable population groups.

37.   UNECE also works with over 30 other UN agencies on the management of geospatial information in the context of the UN Geospatial Network.

B.   Other regional and international organizations

- Basel Convention Secretariat, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), and International Solid Waste Association – waste statistics;

- European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – supporting statistical work in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia through technical cooperation and capacity development activities; in 2020, EFTA has supported UNECE's online capacity development events in a wide range of statistical areas;

- European Environment Agency – on climate change-related statistics;

- Global Forum for Geography and Statistics – webinars on using statistical and geospatial information;

- International Energy Agency – climate change-related statistics;

- Data Documentation Initiative – development and integration of standards for modernization of official statistics.

C.   Academia

- University of Oxford's Poverty and Human Development Initiative (UK) – work on poverty measurement

- Bennet Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge (UK) – climate change-related statistics

- United Nations University and University of Leeds – waste statistics

- University of Geneva – business registers and globalisation

- Deakin University (Australia), VITO research (Belgium), Acadia University (Canada), University of Ottawa (uOttawa), IT Center for Science (Finland), University of Edinburgh (UK) – various projects related to modernization of official statistics

- Universitat Rovira I Virgili (Spain), University of Oklahoma (USA) – statistical confidentiality.

IV. Meetings organized in 2020

38. In 2020, the UNECE Statistical Division organized 33 meetings and workshops presented in the annex. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all events starting from mid-March took place as hybrid and online meetings and webinars. Documents for public meetings are available at the UNECE meetings web pages.

Annex

List of meetings held January to December 2020

Table
Key events of the Conference of European Statisticians from January to December 2020

Jointly with	Meeting (venue)	Date
OECD	Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on SEEA implementation (Geneva, Switzerland)	13-14 February
	CES Bureau Meeting (Aguascalientes, Mexico)	25-26 February
	High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) Chief Statisticians Meeting (New York, USA)	1 March
	Task Force on Measuring the quality of administrative sources for censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	5-6 March

Note: Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the following meetings and workshops took place online, unless otherwise indicated

Jointly with	Meeting (venue)	Date
Eurostat, UN-GGIM: Europe	Joint Eurostat/UNECE/UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop on integrating statistical and geospatial data	27 March
	Workshop on the use of artificial intelligence (machine learning) for the production of statistics	1-17 April
	Expert Meeting and workshop on statistics for SDGs	22-28 April
	Webinar on geo-statistical responses to the Covid-19 crisis	20 May
	How are national statistical offices contributing to managing the Covid-19 disaster?	10 June
	68th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, Switzerland, hybrid meeting)	22-24 June
	Workshop on statistical data editing	31 August – 4 September
	Group of Experts on national accounts	1-18 September
	Covid-19 response in statistical data dissemination and communication	7-9 September
	Covid-19 response in human resources management and training	9-11 September
	Blue Skies Thinking Network pitch talks	16-17 September
Eurostat/EFTA	Joint UNECE/Eurostat/EFTA High-level Seminar for EECCA countries	23-24 September
	Expert Forum for users and producers of climate change-related statistics	28 September – 1 October
	Group of Experts on population and housing censuses	29 September – 1 October
	Data collection and the impact, challenges and opportunities of the Covid-19 pandemic	5-8 October
	UNECE Meetings on gender statistics	12-14 October
	Workshop on the use of artificial intelligence (machine learning) for the production of statistics	13-15 October
	CES Bureau meeting	15-16 October
Environment Division	Joint Task Force on environmental statistics and indicators	26 October
	Webinars on producing CPI under lockdown	21 October – 11 November
	Meetings on migration statistics	27-28 October
	ModernStats World workshop	27-30 October
	Workshop on ensuring statistical confidentiality (differential privacy)	29-30 October

	Expert Meeting on modernizing statistical legislation	3 and 5 November
	Webinar on the use of artificial intelligence (machine learning) for the production of statistics	16-17 November
	Annual workshop of the High-level Group for Modernization of Official Statistics	18-19 November
	Webinar on Statsbots	20 November
EFTA	Joint EFTA/UNECE Training workshop on climate change-related statistics for EECCA countries	18, 25 November and 2 December
	Meetings on measuring poverty and inequality	2-4 December