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## Economic Commission for Europe

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Item 7 (d) of the provisional agenda
**Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference:**
**Approaches to measuring social exclusion**

## Results of the consultation on *Approaches to measuring social exclusion*
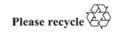
### Prepared by the Secretariat

*Summary*

This note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the "Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion" (ECE/CES/2021/5). The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the document in March–April 2021.

A total of 39 countries and 2 organizations replied to the request for comments. There was general support for the main findings and recommendations made in the document. Countries and organizations also provided detailed comments that are summarized in this document.

In addition, the consultation invited countries to provide their national experiences in measuring social exclusion (or related concepts) by filling a country practice questionnaire and templates. Twenty-seven countries provided information on their experience in measuring social exclusion.

The Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion*, subject to the amendments outlined in this document and the inclusion of country experiences collected in the consultation.

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# I. Introduction

1. The present note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the recommendations in March–April 2021. The CES members were asked to structure their comments according to a set of questions on general and specific issues. In addition, the consultation invited countries to provide their national experiences in measuring social exclusion (or related concepts) by filling a country practice questionnaire and templates.

2. The document *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion* was prepared by the Task Force on the measurement of social exclusion, which includes representatives from national statistical offices of United Kingdom (Chair), Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Canada, Czechia, Germany, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania, Switzerland and United States, as well as from Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Istanbul Regional Hub, UNECE, and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Task Force. The Task Force will revise the document as described in the present note and update it with the country experiences shared in the consultation.

3. The comments and the Task Force's reactions are summarized in sections III–V. Several countries provided editorial comments and suggestions related to document formatting, typographical and linguistic issues. These are not presented in this note but will be taken into account when revising and editing the document for publication. Comments and observations about the specific situation in individual countries which have no direct implications for the content are also not presented in this note.

# II. Summary

4. In the electronic consultation, responses were received from the following 41 countries and organizations: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United States, Uzbekistan, Eurostat, and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

5. The responding countries and organizations considered the document ready for endorsement at the CES plenary session, subject to incorporation of the comments made in the consultation. Twenty-seven countries provided information on their experience in measuring social exclusion.

# III. General comments

6. Countries expressed support and found the document to be useful. Croatia considers it an extremely useful tool for further development of living conditions statistics. The Russian Federation notes its practical importance for developing initiatives on measuring social exclusion, as well as its importance for harmonization of concepts in this area. Mexico, Serbia and Romania appreciate the work on reviewing key country definitions and practices in measuring social exclusion. Latvia finds it as a good basis, which would help communicating social exclusion data. Eurostat supports the work and believes the additional examples collected with the current consultation will enrich the document and will allow a better overview of the situation in all UNECE countries. UNSD welcomes the document and believes that this regional initiative will be useful for future expansion into a global priority.

7. Austria signalled that the report of the Task Force should be viewed as an instructive document, which can set the path to its future evolution, rather than a guide. This will ensure that although currently there is no consensus on exact definition on social exclusion, its measurement will not be understood as arbitrary. In addition, several respondents requested

further analysis on a range of issues, which would, however, surpass the mandate of this Task Force. For example, Liechtenstein suggested an in-depth analysis on the possibilities of using administrative records for measuring social exclusion, and Mexico proposed a comparison between measurement tools and indicator frameworks.

8.      Several European Union (EU) countries mentioned that building further statistical capacity in this field would go beyond existing European regulations, frameworks and processes. UNSD strongly supported the use of the 2030 Agenda as a unifying framework for different approaches to measure social exclusion.

### Response by the Task Force

#### 1.    Scope of the document and new chapter "Future work"

9.      The agreed scope of the Task Force was to highlight different ways in which social exclusion and related concepts have been measured, with country examples and links to further information. The Task Force has also mapped how specific measures are used in a range of indicator frameworks to enable greater understanding of the similarities and differences between different approaches to measurement. The Task Force agrees with the importance of the issues raised for further analysis such as the use of administrative records and comparison between measurement tools and indicator frameworks, which would be valuable for identifying best practice. Therefore, the Task Force decided to add a new chapter "Future work" where such issues will be briefly explained.

#### 2.    EU regulations and frameworks

10.     The document is intended to provide inspiration about a range of different ways in which it may be possible to measure aspects of social exclusion. The Task Force aimed to supplement existing approaches to measurement, suggesting ways in which those with deeper interest in social exclusion could pursue it further. It also addresses countries outside the EU, giving them an opportunity to learn about best practices from other statistical systems, including the EU. The Task Force has also focused on how measurement of progress towards Sustainable Development Goals can provide insights into social exclusion and believes this offers a wider, unifying framework that may help to facilitate comparisons across regions.

*11.*     The Task Force will add the following paragraph to recognise this concern:

> *"The provision of sufficient means and statistical capacity for measuring social exclusion is crucial. The document aims to inspire their best possible use and not to substitute for the relevant legal and policy processes. The document addresses the entire UNECE region, giving the opportunity to countries to learn from best practices. It focuses on how measurement of progress towards Sustainable Development Goals could provide insights into social exclusion and offer a wider, unifying framework to facilitate comparisons across regions."*

## IV.   Comments on recommendations

12.     Mexico would like to stress the difficulties associated with the surveying process, such as insufficient infrastructure, insecurity for the interviewers and interviewees, and lack of trust in institutions.

13.     Malta would like to highlight the fact that surveying hard to reach groups, such as homeless persons, remains an issue for surveys which rely on household registers for the addresses of sampled individuals.

14.     Austria asked to clarify how the measurement of social exclusion can add value to the measurement of poverty as defined in other UNECE guidance.

15.     Austria commented that paragraph 191 suggests cross survey imputation, which may be even disadvantageous in case the correlations cannot be preserved. To target intersections of disadvantageous conditions, it is usually advisable to collect information with one survey, eventually augmenting data from administrative sources. They emphasized the need to collect

data on as many relevant dimensions of social exclusion as possible for the same individuals within single survey operations. In practice these will often be the same data collections that are used for the measurement of poverty. They also noted that paragraph 191 appears redundant with paragraph 192.

16.    In another comment, Austria supports data integration and was expecting an explanation on how that may improve the measurement of social exclusion in granular data. They suggested to include examples on alternatives to granular (i.e. individual level) data such as a spatial index of social exclusion.

17.    Finally, Austria notes that the document should reaffirm the need to collect longitudinal data which record individual trajectories to assess the process of social exclusion and persistence of disadvantage.

18.    UNSD asked about any plans to recommend improving the measurement of the environmental dimension, e.g. including sub-groups most prone to disaster risks, pollution and contamination, climate change, etc. in addition to the economic and social dimensions of social exclusion.

## Response by the Task Force

### 1.    Difficulties with surveying process in countries

19.    The Task Force recognizes that not all countries are in the same position when addressing difficulties associated with measuring social exclusion, particularly regarding those who may be at greater risk of experiencing it, such as homeless people. To do so will require augmenting the traditional approaches of household-based sample surveys with alternative approaches. The Task Force has highlighted in chapter 5 how different countries have approached this. For example, section 5.1 refers to unwillingness to participate, mistrust, lack of usual place of residence or inability to access e-questionnaire among reasons for undercoverage of particular population groups, and table 5.1 suggests ways to improve trust. Section 5.2 gives several examples of how it may be possible to improve participation among those reluctant to take part in surveys.

### 2.    Measuring population living outside private dwellings

20.    Chapter 5 highlights a range of ways in which homelessness can and has been measured in different countries, including through the use of censuses, surveys and other administrative information on the population living outside of the private dwelling universe. The Task Force would not anticipate that the exclusive use of either registers or surveys will necessarily provide a complete picture, and a more comprehensive information could be obtained through triangulation of different methods. The Task Force will note this explicitly in the recommendations and acknowledge that countries will have different constraints and capacities for undertaking this type of work.

### 3.    Measurement of social exclusion and measurement of poverty

21.    The measurement of social exclusion complements poverty measurement and adds insights beyond what might be gained by looking at monetary poverty alone. Similar to multidimensional poverty, a social exclusion focus can help to identify groups that are not in poverty but may be excluded in other ways, or who are experiencing multiple forms of exclusion. It can also draw attention to the deprivations and disadvantages that limit participation, rather than the outcomes of these limitations, which may lead to insights on appropriate interventions. This clarification will be added in chapter 1 "Introduction".

### 4.    Cross survey imputation

22.    Paragraph 191 focuses on possible use of data linkage and cross-survey imputation to provide greater insights into specific groups at greater risk of social exclusion but who may under-represented or not represented at all in household surveys. Paragraph 192 focuses on how statisticians can make greater progress in measuring different ways in which social exclusion may affect people's lives (i.e., widening the scope of topics covered). It also notes

the relevance of this in relation to geographical granularity as well as to diverse sub-populations. The Task Force believes there is merit both in finding new ways to capture those who may be under-represented in our traditional approaches to measurement as well as to expanding the breadth of what is known about how social exclusion affects their lives and where people are more or less likely to be affected by social exclusion. The Task Force agrees that cross-survey imputation may not always be the best choice. The need for careful consideration of the methods for more inclusive data collection on hard-to-reach populations, and methods of data linkage across sources or cross-survey imputation is emphasised in section 7.3 "Conclusions and recommendations". Although the one-survey approach is preferred, many countries are not in a position to get all the information from one survey. This is highlighted in chapter 7 "Taking stock of where we are now".

### 5. Granular data and alternatives to granular data

23. The Task Force considers that capturing more specifically where social exclusion occurs is a form of granularity in itself. The Task Force will include suggestions for further examples on alternatives to granular (i.e. individual level) data such as a spatial index of social exclusion in the new chapter "Future work".

### 6. Longitudinal data

24. The Task Force agrees with the importance of longitudinal data and its inclusion in future work when more specific (and agreed upon) criteria for best practice in the measurement of social exclusion are developed. The issue of longitudinal data will be included in the new chapter "Future work".

### 7. Environment dimension

25. The Task Force will refer to the environment dimension in the new chapter "Future work".

## V. Chapter-specific comments

26. Comments provided on specific chapters are addressed below. No comments were received on chapter 1 "Introduction".

## A. Chapter 2: What is social exclusion? A brief review of the literature

27. Austria, Brazil and Mexico pointed out that the document is missing a definition on social exclusion. Austria stressed that to effectively guide measurement it would be useful to clearly specify certain minimum criteria for a working definition of social exclusion and made a suggestion for a list of such minimum criteria. Brazil noted that the term "social exclusion" is used in different situations and with different meanings for different people (as demonstrated in chapter 3). Mexico considered that the work would benefit from coining its own definition or choosing one out of the presented in the literature review for the purpose of the research.

28. Hungary remarked the absence of possible links between online social exclusion and (offline) social exclusion.

29. Austria argued that the difficulties in determining a threshold with regard to measuring social exclusion are similar to the ones of the monetary poverty lines, therefore "subjectivity" should not be stressed as a reason.

30. Brazil corrected references to findings from Amartya Sen in paragraphs 17 and 21.

1.   **Response by the Task Force**

A.   *Definition on "social exclusion"*

31.     Arriving at a specific definition of social exclusion was outside the Task Force's <u>terms of reference</u>. The Task Force has presented an overview of the concept's origin, how it has evolved and how it has been used in practice. The Task Force has highlighted different ways in which social exclusion and related concepts have been measured, with specific examples and links to further information as a source of inspiration and consideration for countries in widely varying circumstances. Because of these varying circumstances, building consensus for a common internationally agreed definition would be a challenging effort. The Task Force agrees that such internationally agreed definition of social exclusion would be beneficial and will reflect this in the new chapter "Future work", also considering the list of minimum criteria suggested by Austria.

B.   *Digital exclusion*

32.     The Task Force notes that the issue of digital exclusion and its relationship to social exclusion in particular has not been picked up explicitly in the countries' measurement approaches and indicator frameworks considered in the document. The Task Force believes that this issue could be relevant for example in relation to access to services and infrastructure and will suggest it in the revised document.

C.   *Subjectivity in determining thresholds*

33.     The text will be amended to avoid references to "subjectivity" when considering a social exclusion threshold.

D.   *Correction to findings from Amartya Sen*

34.     As pointed out by Brazil, the term "wellbeing deprivations" is replaced with "capability deprivation" in paragraph 17. The text in paragraph 21 will be amended to reflect that "an absolute approach in the space of capabilities translates into a relative approach in the space of commodities" (Sen 1983, p. 168), as follows:

> " ... Note, however, that in the space of capabilities to overcome a social disadvantage does not necessarily translate into the use of an absolute poverty threshold. As Sen observes astutely, poverty may be absolute in the space of capabilities but relative in the space of commodities. He gives the example by Adams Smith that while Greek and Romans lived very comfortably without linen, in richer societies, i.e. 18th century Scotland, in order to enjoy 'the ability to go about without shame' (an absolute capability) a man required leather shoes and a linen shirt (absolute attainments in the space of commodities) (Sen, 1983)"

## B.   Chapter 3: Why measure social exclusion?

35.     Belgium finds chapter 3 less informative as compared to other parts of the document, which discuss good practices, e.g. chapter 5. Brazil suggested that the content of chapter 3 should come before the content of chapter 2.

36.     Mexico proposed to extend the set of country examples that implement strategies or policies against social exclusion to gain understanding in more diverse contexts.

37.     Mexico also referred to the benefits of an analysis of the differences and similarities between the Europe 2020 strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1.   **Response by the Task Force**

A.   *The purpose of chapter 3*

38.     The purpose of chapter 3 was to provide further information about a range of different ways in which social exclusion and related concepts may be of interest to policymakers, as

such interest may spark new measurement approaches by national statistical offices. It was also intended to provide further insights for countries with similar policy goals about how others had benefited from measuring social exclusion.

39.     Regarding the chapter's place, the Task Force notes that there is a logical flow inherent in providing a basic overview of the evolution of the concept of social exclusion and what it involves before providing examples of policy contexts in which social exclusion or related concepts are used. The current structure follows this flow.

B.     *New country examples*

40.     Additional country examples have been collected through the current consultation. The final document will include these new examples.

C.     *Differences or similarities between the SDGs and the EU 2020 strategy*

41.     A new section on comparing the Europe 2020 strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be added to the document, including a box describing the case of Montenegro.

## C.     Chapter 4: Approaches to measuring social exclusion

42.     Brazil requested a subgroup analysis, including specific questions for children and family background.

43.     Austria clarified that social exclusion is not only culturally specific but also a normative concept, which should be defined in relation to the local but also to historical context.

44.     Hungary noted that it would be helpful to consider examples of measuring radicalisation linked to social exclusion (as mentioned in Box 3.1).

45.     Colombia drew the attention to the Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) of the International Women´s Development Agency, Australian National University and the Australian Government, a gender-sensitive measure of multidimensional poverty, developed to assess poverty at individual level. In addition to common dimensions on poverty assessment, the IDM collects data also on decision making, personal support and experience of violence.

46.     Finland suggested to include information on the current work on revising the AROPE, the key indicator to monitor poverty and social exclusion in the European framework. They also noted that a European statistical recovery dashboard has been set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and there are proposals to add new infra-annual measures related to social exclusion.

### 1.     Response by the Task Force

A.     *Subgroup analysis*

47.     The Task Force considers the subgroup analysis suggested by Brazil relevant to subsequent work on the measurement of social exclusion, which can lead to agreed parameters as to what is most important to measure and how. The suggestion for such type of analysis will be included in the new chapter "Future work".

B.     *Social exclusion concept in context*

48.     The precisions made by Austria regarding normative aspect and historical context will be added.

C.    *New examples*

49.    The Task Force has sought examples first from Task Force members and subsequently more widely across countries participating in CES. No example in relation to radicalisation and social exclusion was received during these consultations.

D.    *Individual Deprivation Measure*

50.    The example of the Individual Deprivation Measure will be included in the document. The following paragraph will be added in section 4.4 "Measurement tools and indicators frameworks" as well as references to this method will be made in table 4.1.

> *"The Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) developed by the International Women's Development Agency in partnership with the Australian National University and the Australian Government is another approach to the measurement of multi-dimensional poverty. It is a gender-sensitive measure focusing on poverty at the individual rather than household level. It uses 15 indicators of poverty across a range of areas of life drawing on more traditional indicators of multi-dimensional poverty such as employment and education as well as a range of other measures that help to highlight the specific ways in which women may experience poverty. The full range of measured topics include: food/ nutrition; water; shelter; health care/ health; education; energy/ cooking fuel; sanitation; family relations; clothing/ personal care; violence; family planning; environment; voice; time use; and work."*

D.    *Ongoing AROPE revisions and the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard*

51.    The following information on the ongoing AROPE revisions and the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard will be added:

-    AROPE revisions:

> *"The last two components of the AROPE indicator (severe material deprivation and very low work intensity) are being revised. It is planned from 2021 onwards to use the following definitions:*
>
> > • *Persons severely materially deprived – living conditions are severely constrained by a lack of resources; seven out of the thirteen following deprivations items are experienced: cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) replacing worn-out furniture, viii) having internet connection, ix) replacing worn-out clothes by some new ones, x) having two pairs of shoes, xi)spending a small amount of money each week on him/herself, xii) having regular leisure activities, or xiii) getting together with friends/family for a drink/meal at least once a month;*
> >
> > • *Persons living in households with very low work intensity – those aged 0–64 living in households where the adults (aged 18–64, but excluding students aged 18–24 and people who are retired according to their self-defined current economic status or who receive any pension (except survivors pension), as well as people in the age bracket 60–64 who are inactive and living in a household where the main income is pensions) worked less than 20% of their total combined work-time potential during the previous 12 months.*
>
> *The current AROPE will be used for monitoring the EU 2020 strategy while the revised AROPE will be used as the headline indicator for monitoring poverty and social exclusion in the years ahead."*

-    European statistical recovery dashboard:

> *"At the European Union level, a European Statistical Recovery Dashboard has been setup in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides monthly or quarterly indicators to track the economic and social developments during the recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak in the Member States and EU as a whole. The dashboard focuses primarily on economic*

*indicators, however, includes also indicators on economic activity in particular unemployment and NEET rate."*

52. Regarding infra-annual data, its development is on very early stages, and therefore not included it in the document. The data are not available yet and are not expected sooner than by the end of year.

## D. Chapter 5: Measuring social exclusion among groups at risk of multiple disadvantage

53. Czechia questioned whether surveys on population at risk of social exclusion should be part of official statistics and noted their limited capacity to produce surveys in special localities.

54. Mexico requested a short summary of the reasons for the potential undercoverage given by the *UNECE Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation*.

55. Austria noted the importance of including a reference to the Human Rights Based Approach to Data (HRBAD) developed by the UNHCHR, to ensure participation of marginalised groups during the whole measurement process.

56. Austria and UNDP suggested updates on references to recent work on Roma population using innovative techniques in box 5.4 "Examples of surveys among groups at higher risk of social exclusion".

57. UNSD asked to briefly mention possible mode effects for data collection across sub-groups.

### 1. Response by the Task Force

#### A. Capacity constraints

58. The Task Force understands that each country and national statistical institute has its own priorities and constraints. The examples given are to provide inspiration for what may be possible, rather than a prescription of what should be done. The Task Force will clearly acknowledge that the context and capacities are different in each country.

#### B. Undercoverage

*59.* The following short explanation for the potential undercoverage will be added:

*"Reasons given for undercoverage provided in the Guide [re: UNECE Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation] include those mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as language barriers which hamper survey participation, the lack of an adequate sample frame, and that the group may live (at least partially) outside of the sampling frame, such as in institutions or collective dwellings."*

#### C. Human Rights Based Approach to Data

60. The Task Force will refer to the HRBAD in chapter 5 and include a link to it as well as referencing it.

#### D. References to recent work on Roma surveys using innovative techniques

*61.* The paragraph in box 5.4 will be revised as follows:

*"Sampling approaches in Roma Surveys – innovative strategies: Capturing those who are difficult to sample, identify, contact, persuade or interview often requires the development of innovative strategies. The UNECE publication Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation (UNECE, 2020, pp.79–80, Box 3.7 "UNDP-Sampling approaches in Roma Surveys") outlines various sampling approaches and identification techniques employed in several Roma surveys. Techniques mentioned include multi-stage sampling, random start and equal*

*random walk designs. Innovative methodologies were developed especially during the second European Union Minorities and Discrimination survey (EU-MIDIS II), which was launched by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2015/16, the Regional Roma survey conducted by UNDP and World Bank in 20171, as well as previous Roma surveys conducted by UNDP or FRA."*

*E.* *Mode effects*

*62.* Regarding mode effects the following text will be added in chapter 5:

*"There are many benefits to tailoring the survey mode according to the situation and preferences of the target respondents. Canadian experience has shown that respondents in the northern territories are more likely to participate in surveys when they are administered in person. However, survey designers need to be aware of possible "mode effects" which could create differences in responses across survey modes."*

## E.   Chapter 6: Approaches to presenting social exclusion findings

63.     The Task Force will correct the example from Switzerland to reflect that they do not maintain a dashboard but a website with multidimensional measurements of social exclusion.

## F.   Chapter 7: Taking stock of where we are now

64.     Mexico pointed out the need to recognise the limitations of the document. Furthermore, they suggested to move section 7.3 "How social exclusion measurement can contribute to monitoring progress towards the sustainable development goals" to chapter 3.

### 1.   Response by the Task Force

65.     The CES Task Forces often identify a range of important and relevant issues that cannot be resolved within the given mandate and are usually summarized in a separate chapter or section. CES often considers this material for launching follow-up work in any of these areas. The work on measuring social exclusion also brought up many such issues. To address the limitations of the current document, the Task Force will include the description of such issues in the new chapter "Future work" to make clear that the current document does not resolve these issues and that they will be considered for future work.

66.     Section 7.3 will be moved to chapter 3 as suggested by Mexico.

## VI.   Proposal to the Conference

67.     The Conference is invited to endorse the *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion*, subject to the amendments outlined in this document, the addition of the new chapter "Future work", and the inclusion of country experiences collected in the consultation.

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