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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 2021

Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

The document provides a short summary of the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2021. The annex includes the list of meetings organized in 2021. The document is submitted to the Conference for approval.

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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 2021 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 1.
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
- Measures beyond GDP
- Economic globalization
- Exchange of economic data
- Business registers
- Consumer price index
- Quality of employment

Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality
- Population and housing censuses
- Poverty and inequalities
- Migration
- Gender
- Children 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 ethics
- 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.   In 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the work of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in the region. NSOs faced greatly increased demand for statistics to manage the pandemic and its impacts, while it was necessary to find new ways to collect data under the restrictions due to the pandemic. Learning from experience in 2020, statistical offices continue to innovate, and are introducing the new approaches as part of a regular production process.

7.   The pandemic has affected all areas of statistics and activated Covid-19 response across all work areas, focusing on 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. A joint informal session of CES and OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy in June 2021 had a high-level

discussion on "Post-Covid: sustaining organisational and product innovation in NSOs"[1]. A dedicated webinar was held on measuring poverty in pandemic times[2].

8.   UNECE is maintaining a wiki platform on Covid-19 and official statistics[3] to support statistical production in the face of the crisis and guide statistical producers to existing and newly developed resources from UNECE and partners. The platform 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.

II.   Description of the main accomplishments in 2021

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

9.   In 2021, 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) new forms of employment and quality of employment: implications for official statistics, (ii) subjective poverty measures, and (iii) measuring non-observed/informal economy. All in-depth review papers are available on the UNECE website.

10.   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. In 2021, the collaboration agreement between the secretariats of UN-GGIM: Europe and UNECE was renewed until 2023. The second joint session of CES and UN-GGIM: Europe is being prepared to take place in 2022. In 2021, a UNECE task team produced a geospatial view of UNECE's Generic Statistical Business Process Model, highlighting the ways in which geospatial information contribute to the production of official statistics.

B.   Methodological work

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

12.   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 2021, the *Second Edition of the CES Road Map on statistic*s for SDGs was finalized and endorsed by the CES plenary session. By end of 2021, 43 countries in the ECE region set up their National Reporting Platforms. In 2021, UNECE continued to maintain and improve its regional platform on statistics for SDGs launched in 2020, which consists 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. In 2021, the Russian version of the dashboard became available. Moreover, the second report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region "*Is the UNECE region on track for 2030?*" was prepared for the 2021 session of UNECE Commission. The report assessed progress in the region with a common methodology used by the five UN regional commissions. It featured stories from the United Nations country teams and agencies active in the region, and

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[1] https://unece.org/statistics/events/CES2021
[2] https://unece.org/info/Statistics/events/352211
[3] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/COV/Home

took a closer look at how various regional and country level actions relate to sustainable development outcomes.

13. 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.

14. In 2021, CES endorsed four 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 finalized in 2021:

(a) *Conference of European Statisticians' 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

(b) *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.

(c) 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.

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

(e) *Guide on Producing CPI under Lockdown* presents recommendations and emerging best practices in data collection, calculation methods and communication of the consumer price index under lockdown conditions based on experiences from the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.

15. 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.

16. In 2021, UNECE Task Forces have prepared the following outputs for submission to the 2022 CES plenary session for endorsement (subject to a positive outcome of a wide consultation before the plenary session):

(a) *Measuring of the value of official statistics* proposes a technique for identifying the components that make up that value of official statistics and for developing measurable indicators from these components. The report reviews potential measures of value and showcases a diverse array of case studies of countries' efforts to quantify aspects of value*;*

(b) *Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with a disability* provides information about the data sources, definitions, standards, and methods used in the collection of data and production of statistics on children, adolescents, and youth. The Guidance focuses on three policy-relevant areas with methodological gaps: violence against children, children in alternative care, and children with a disability;

(c) *Handbook on forms of employment* proposes a conceptual framework that identifies and maps the relationships between concepts essential for measuring and identifying new and established forms of employment*;*

(d) *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration* presents national experiences with big data and new data sources. The report is accompanied by a literature database containing references of published works in migration-related matters using innovative methods and/or new data sources;

(e) An updated version of the *Classification of Statistical Activities*; the Classification can be used to catalogue data and metadata as well as events, capacity building activities and international work;

(f) List of core values of official statistics and their mapping to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics provide an ethical framework to support decision-making and interactions with governments, society and other stakeholders.

17. Moreover, *Guidance on measuring the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and men* was developed and will be presented to the CES plenary session to promote its use. The guidance provides the proposed indicators and a set of questions to add to household surveys to measure the differentiated impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and men.

18. UNECE developed these outputs 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 2021: the Input Privacy Preservation project and the Synthetic Data Guide Project. Moreover, two official UNECE publications were prepared based project outputs from previous years: *Strategic Communication Framework for Statistical Institutions* and *Machine Learning for Official Statistics.* These activities are in addition to the work of the core sub-groups on Supporting Standards, Capacities and Communication, the Blue Skies Thinking Network and the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics (ONS)-UNECE Machine Learning Group 2021.

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 2021, UNECE finalised 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 Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine.

24.   Statistical capacity development activities contributed to progress in areas identified for improvement in the Global Assessments. They are carried out at countries' request often in partnership with other relevant international organisations and UN Country Teams.

25.   To address member States' requests for assistance in implementing CES recommendations, including the *Roadmap on Statistics for SDGs*, UNECE has been carrying out a UNDA-funded "Programme on statistics and data to build countries' capacity for monitoring progress towards SDGs". This programme ended 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.   United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 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 2021, the SDG dashboard continued to provide 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 the report for the annual UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, and 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 UNECE 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;

- 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 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 2021. 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

- Eurasian Economic Commission – on statistics for SDGs and economic 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; 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;

- PARIS21 – capacity building, statistics for SDGs, climate change-related statistics;

- Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) – managerial and strategic issues of official statistics;

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

- Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) – hazardous events and disasters, statistics for SDGs.

C. Academia

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

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

- United Nations University – waste statistics;

- University of Geneva – business registers and globalisation;

- Deakin University (Australia), Delft Technical University, VITO research (Belgium), Acadia University (Canada), University of Ottawa (Canada), Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Spain), University of Cardiff (United Kingdom), University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom), University of Oklahoma (the United States), IT Center for Science (Finland), privacy Analytics (Canada), Sarus and Knexus Research (the United States) – various projects and activities related to modernization of official statistics.

IV. Meetings organized in 2021

38.   In 2021, the UNECE Statistical Division organized 27 meetings and workshops presented in the annex. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all events 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 2021

Table 1.
Key events of the Conference of European Statisticians from January to December 2021

The meetings took place online, unless otherwise indicated.

Jointly with	Meeting (venue)	Date
	CES Bureau meeting	17-18 February
OECD	Joint Seminar on SEEA Implementation	9-11 March
	Workshop on Measuring Informal Economy	22-26 March
UN-GGIM: Europe and Eurostat	Joint Workshop on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information	24 March
	Workshop on Measuring Poverty in Pandemic Times	25-26 March
UNSD	Fifth Workshop on Statistics for SDGs	29 March-1 April
	Fifth Expert Meeting on Statistics for SDGs	29 March-1 April
OECD, Eurostat	Group of Experts on National Accounts	17-26 May
	Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses	19-20 May
	Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices	2-10 June
	Expert Forum on measuring hazardous events and disasters	7, 8, 10 June
	69th Plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (hybrid, Geneva, Switzerland)	23-25 June
	Expert Forum for Users and Producers of Climate Change-related Statistics	31 August-3 September
	Group of Experts on Gender Statistics	28-29 September
	Joint High-Level Seminar for EECCA Countries	23-24 September
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection	27-30 September
	Expert Meeting on Dissemination and Communication of Statistics	11-14 October
	CES Bureau meeting	13-14 October
Environment Division	Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (hybrid, Geneva, Switzerland)	18-19 October
	Workshop on Measuring Migration and Remittances	26 October
Eurostat	Group of Experts on Migration Statistics	27-28 October
ILO	Group of Experts on Quality of Employment	9-18 November
	Workshop on Modernization of Official Statistics	15-16 November
EFTA	Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation	18-19 November
	Workshop on harmonization of poverty statistics to measure SDG 1 and 10	30 November
	Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality	1-2 December
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Confidentiality (Poznan, Poland)	1-3 December