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**Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference:
Statistics on children*****Results of the consultation on Guidance on Statistics on
Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in
alternative care, and with a disability*****Prepared by the Secretariat***Summary*

The document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with a disability* (ECE/CES/2022/4). The Secretariat carried out the electronic consultation from March to April 2022.

A total of 35 countries and one international organization replied. Countries supported the endorsement of the Guidance, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided during the consultation. No country opposed the endorsement. The final version of the *Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with a disability* with the amendments will be available at the [web page](#) of the 2022 CES plenary session.

In view of the strong support received, the Conference is invited to endorse the final Guidance, and support the proposals for further work in Chapter 7 of the Guidance.



I. Introduction

1. This document summarizes comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with a disability*. The UNECE Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Guidance from March to April 2022.
2. The Guidance is the result of the work of the Task Force on statistics on children, adolescents and youth established the CES Bureau in February 2020, composed of Canada (Chair), Ireland, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, the European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and UNECE.
3. The CES Bureau reviewed the draft Guidance in February 2022 and requested the Secretariat send the document to all CES members for electronic consultation.
4. The following 35 countries and one international organization replied to the consultation: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).
5. **Belarus, Finland, and Hungary** completed the survey of countries conducted by the Task Force in January 2021. These responses have been incorporated into the final version of the Guidance.
6. The CES consultation feedback form also invited countries to share information on the production of statistics of children. This information is not summarized in this document but will be used to inform future work in this area.
7. This document presents the main substantive comments received. Several countries provided editorial comments related to document formatting or typographical issues. These are not presented in this note but have been reflected in the edited Guidance. Comments and observations about the situation in individual countries with no direct implications for the content of the Guidance are not presented in this note.
8. The Task Force has discussed all comments and has edited the Guidance accordingly or provided a response in this document. The final *Guidance on Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with a disability* submitted for endorsement will be available on the web page of the 2022 CES plenary session.

II. General comments

9. Thirty-two countries and organizations explicitly supported endorsement of the Guidance, subject to the amendments presented in this document. No country opposed the endorsement. Responding countries indicated that the Guidance is a relevant, comprehensive, and useful resource for improving the availability, quality, and international comparability of statistics on children exposed to violence, children in alternative care, and children with a disability. The need for harmonized definitions, standardized methodologies, and the dissemination of best practices in these areas of statistics were recognized. For example:

(a) **Albania:** “The guidance will be useful and a good source for INSTAT, especially to standardize the definitions and methodologies to ensure comparability in an international perspective.”

(b) **Latvia:** “A very comprehensive, useful material, which will definitely be used when producing statistics on children.”

(c) **Mexico:** “The Guidance...is a set of pertinent, complete, and useful guidelines to advance the collection, standardization, analysis, and dissemination of data on children that face violence, children in alternative care and children with disabilities. Its publication

must be welcomed, and the document must be widely disseminated for the application all the countries.”

(d) **Slovakia**: “Conclusions and recommendations of this document are very useful, especially the elaboration national plan for indicators related to the statistics on children.”

(e) **Sweden**: “Congratulations on compiling an interesting and well elaborated document – we have read the guidance with great interest!”

(f) **United Kingdom**: “This guidance provides valuable recommendations for improving the quality of statistics on children.”

10. Some countries acknowledged national data gaps in the areas covered in the Guidance and expressed appreciation for the attention it brings to the policy relevance of data and statistics on these groups of children. Several countries pointed to practical applications. **Latvia**, for example, indicated that the Guidance would spur evaluation of new aspects of regular data collection and **Mexico** suggested it may lead to the development of new statistical programmes. **Albania** and **Norway** reported ongoing efforts to improve statistics on children and welcomed the recommendations as timely support for this work.

11. Several countries referred to the inter-agency or decentralized nature of data collection on the topics covered in the Guidance, recognizing the need for better inter-agency coordination but also the challenge this coordination may pose for the implementation of recommendations. **Belgium**, **Hungary**, and **Romania** reported the use of European household surveys to collect information on children and the need to align with Eurostat regulations.

12. **Ukraine** remarked that it would be useful to translate the document into the official languages of the United Nations and that an online platform on the topic would facilitate the exchange of experience and sharing of best practices among countries.

13. The recommendations offered in the Guidance were described by **Sweden** as ambitious in a positive sense. Several countries observed that the availability of resources may constrain the implementation of the recommendations proposed in the Guidance and called for international financial support for statistics on children.

14. The Task Force appreciates the comments on potential barriers to implementation and has made amendments to the final version of the Guidance which emphasize the need for increased national and international resources for statistics on children and youth and acknowledge that the implementation of recommendations—which are not binding—will depend on each country’s national circumstances.

III. Specific comments

15. This section summarizes comments received on specific chapters of the Guidance, together with the responses by the Task Force where applicable.

A. Chapter 2: General issues for statistics on children and youth

16. **Croatia** and **Mexico** highlighted the importance of harmonized definitions for children and youth. Mexico pointed to UNICEF definitions for the concepts of early childhood, childhood, and adolescence as a good starting point. **Malta** suggested the Guidance acknowledge how cultural considerations and legal frameworks contribute to unique national definitions for children and youth.

17. **Austria** and **Croatia** acknowledged the potential of the European Child Guarantee to generate new data on children and youth.

18. **Latvia** suggested that the Guidance emphasize the role of international organizations in the identification of data gaps related to SDG reporting. **Australia** pointed out that data gaps might reflect missing data or data that are outdated or infrequently collected.

19. **Finland** highlighted the importance of disaggregation by sex and proposed gender mainstreaming for statistics on children. Finland also pointed out that extra efforts may be required to collect data on very young children and vulnerable groups.

20. **Italy** suggested that the recommendation around the development of standards and protocols for the rigorous and safe collection of data on violence against children be expanded to refer to data collection on children more generally.

21. **Latvia** noted challenges around the implementation of recommendation 2 on the inclusion of children in regular data collection and the fielding of child-focused surveys, including the need for additional financial resources and internationally standardized survey methodology as well as the methodological challenges around adding children as a unit of analysis to existing European and national surveys.

22. **Malta** proposed recommendations be made for training for social service workers and educating the general public in the importance of data collection.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

23. The Task Force has edited the Guidance to acknowledge the role of cultural and legal considerations in national definitions of children and youth, which may differ from standardized definitions (once established) used for international reporting. The Guidance now mentions the possibility that UNICEF definitions could be a starting point for the development of harmonized definitions of children and youth, which is a proposed area of future work.

24. The Guidance has been edited to emphasize the role of international organizations in the identification of data gaps, to clarify the types of data gaps that can exist, to suggest disaggregation by sex and gender mainstreaming for statistics on children, to acknowledge resource constraints, and to emphasize the need for additional resources for the development of child-focused statistical infrastructure.

25. The proposals for future work in the chapter have been edited to include the development of standards and protocols for the safe collection and processing on data on children.

26. The Task Force agrees that training of social service workers and educating the general public are important. The Task Force believes additional exploration of these topics, which were not covered in the work of the Task Force, is required before concrete recommendations can be made.

B. Chapter 3: Statistics on violence against children

27. **Finland** and **Mexico** raised the issue of sex disaggregation of SDG indicators on violence against children (16.2.1 and 16.2.3) and the importance of collecting data for both sexes.

28. **Finland** proposed the use of new technologies and Italy proposed statistical modelling to fill data gaps on violence against children. Finland and **Latvia** highlighted the need to consider reporting needs and statistical purposes early in the process of developing or modernizing administrative data systems.

29. **Finland** advocated for further research on the intergenerational transmission of violence and violent crime committed by children and youth.

30. **Italy** suggested the definition of exposure to domestic violence be clarified in the Guidance and raised the issue of differing definitions of infanticide across countries.

31. **Mexico** and Finland highlighted the need for a common international classification of violence that can be used for statistical purposes independently of national legislation and frameworks. Both countries pointed to the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) as an example.

32. **Mexico** advocated for the development of a survey framework or module on violence against children and youth that includes guidance on methodological and ethical issues. Mexico proposes countries that have carried out surveys on violence against women or against children share their experiences.

33. **The Netherlands** pointed out that the implementation of recommendation 4 on the establishment of a coordination mechanism for data collection on violence against children would require coordination among many different agencies and observed that the NSO does not have the mandate to establish such a coordinating body.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

34. The Task Force has edited the Guidance to draw attention to the issue of sex disaggregation for SDG indicators 16.2.1 and 16.2.3 on violence against children.

35. The Guidance has been edited to acknowledge the use of new technologies to produce data on violence against children and to recommend the consideration of statistical production during the design stage of the development of administrative data systems. The Task Force believes that estimates of violence against children should not be based on statistical modelling alone. Modelling may be useful to address underestimation or other measurement issues, but modelling should not be used to replace the production of empirical data.

36. The Task Force agrees that research on the intergenerational transmission of violence and violent crime committed by children and youth is valuable. These issues are not highlighted in the Guidance because the longitudinal data required for such studies extend beyond the survey and administrative data typically collected by countries in the region.

37. The Guidance has been edited to clarify that exposure to domestic violence refers to children witnessing domestic violence and to reference differences in legal definitions of infanticide across countries.

38. The Task Force has added information about UNICEF-initiated work to develop survey questions on sexual violence against children and a statistical classification on all forms of violence against children that aligns with the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS).

39. In line with Mexico's suggestion, the Guidance proposes as areas of future work the development of guidance on the implementation of measurement guidelines and the statistical classification on violence against children being developed by UNICEF and the exchange of national experiences.

40. The Task Force has reformulated recommendation 4 on the establishment of a coordination mechanism to reflect concerns raised by Netherlands.

C. Chapter 4: Statistics on children in alternative care

41. **Finland, Latvia, and Malta** remarked on the significant differences across countries in the architecture of alternative care systems, the challenge this poses for the production of internationally comparable statistics, and the need for coordination at the international level around harmonized criteria for measurement.

42. **Finland** expressed support for the conclusion that administrative data are important but on their own cannot provide information about determinants or outcomes of well-being for children in alternative care and that this is a challenge at the national and international level.

43. **The Netherlands** pointed out that the collection of data on aspects of alternative care beyond stock and flow as suggested in recommendation 9 would produce an administrative burden for the alternative care workers responsible for the recording of these data. The Netherlands suggested that the benefits of collecting such data be carefully weighed against the burden.

44. **Mexico** suggested the exchange of national experiences between countries with similar levels of resources and maturity of data systems as a strategy for advancing institutional capabilities.

45. **Mexico** observed that the recommendations require resources to strengthen basic data infrastructure and for the training of personnel and that a second phase of the Guidance that identifies the areas where countries must invest to achieve the objectives of the Guidance.

46. **Malta** remarked on the importance of not restricting data collection to children under age 18 but continuing to collect data on youth age 18 and older who are still receiving support.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

47. The Guidance has been edited to emphasize the need for coordination at the international level around a minimum set of internationally comparable indicators and to acknowledge that countries may also wish to develop additional national indicators according to national circumstances.

48. The Guidance has been edited to acknowledge the financial and administrative burden the collection of additional data may pose for countries and to suggest countries consider costs and benefits of such data collection within the country context. The need for additional financial resources—at national and international levels—for data collection on children has also been emphasized.

49. The chapter’s proposal for future international work have been edited to suggest the facilitation of exchange of practices among countries with similar levels of resources and maturity of data systems.

50. The Guidance has been edited to strengthen the point that data collection on alternative care should include youth age 18 and older in countries that provide alternative care for this population.

51. The Task Force welcomes support from Mexico for the development of practical guidance for countries on the inclusion of children in institutional care in the production of national statistics, which is proposed in the Guidance as an area for future work.

D. Chapter 5: Statistics on children with a disability

52. **Finland** and **Italy** highlighted measurement issues related to proxy responding for survey questions on disability among children. Italy pointed out that household heads may not be as knowledgeable as the primary caregiver of the child. Finland proposed the exploration of administering disability survey questions directly to children.

53. **Finland** and **Italy** raised the issue of disaggregation. Italy highlighted the importance of disaggregation of disability estimates by other individual and household characteristics, and Finland proposed more work be done to establish standardized methods for disaggregation by disability status.

54. **Finland** remarked that the recommendation to establish a focal point for disability statistics is “warmly welcomed” and agreed that coordination between various stakeholders is necessary.

55. **Italy** suggested that guidelines should be developed collaboratively on how to overcome barriers to the implementation of the UNICEF – Washington Group Child Functioning Module (WG CFM).

56. **Malta** highlighted differences in conceptions of disability across cultures and the importance of considering policy objectives in the design of data systems on child disability.

57. **Mexico** remarked on the challenges around the implementation of the WG CFM, including country specific adaptations which may impact international comparability and the impacts on survey length and enumerator training.

58. **Mexico** suggested that it would be beneficial to consider harmonization on basic disability concepts not only between administrative registers, but also between administrative registers and surveys.

59. **Netherlands** highlighted the shared nature of data collection on children with a disability and the importance of sharing data across agencies and organizations to enrich datasets and facilitate research.

60. **United States** commented that question sets on functioning identify those at risk of not only social exclusion, but exclusion from participation across all sectors of society.

61. **United States** provided helpful information on the differences between the Washington Group Short Set and Child Functioning Module as well as and on the measurement of limitations in the Global Activity Limitation Indicator (GALI) survey instrument.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

62. The Task Force has edited the Guidance to expand discussions of proxy responding for surveys of child disability and functioning and data disaggregation.

63. The Task Force welcomes the suggestion by Italy to develop guidelines on addressing barriers to the implementation of the UNICEF-WG CFM, which aligns with proposed future work to investigate barriers to the use of the WG CFM and develop guidance on its appropriate use.

64. The Task Force has edited Chapter 7 on conclusions to emphasize the importance of policy in the development of national plans for statistics on children and the need for data sharing across agencies involved in data collection on children. The issue of cultural differences is already addressed throughout the Guidance.

65. The challenges around the implementation of the UNICEF-WG CFM highlighted by Mexico are articulated in paragraph 239.

66. The Task Force believes the harmonization of concepts across administrative and survey sources is an ambitious goal and has not included it in its recommendations.

67. A definition of social exclusion has been added to the Guidance to clarify that social exclusion refers to exclusion from economic, social, political and cultural life.

68. The Guidance has been edited to incorporate information provided by United States on the Washington Group and GALI survey instruments.

E. Chapter 6: Ethical considerations for the collection and dissemination of data on children

69. **Canada, Italy, and Mexico** highlighted certain ethical and methodological constraints around collecting data on violence against children, including mandatory reporting laws, the impact of parental consent and proxy responding on the reliability of data collected, and the potential of surveys questions on violence to cause emotional distress for children.

70. **Australia** highlighted the importance of clearly communicating the intended use of data as part of the informed consent process.

71. **Croatia** remarked that ethical considerations are “optimally” addressed in the chapter.

72. **Mexico** pointed out that data collection on violence against children requires the identification of suitable spaces for data collection which may require prior consultation with adult informants. Mexico also highlighted the distress surveys on violence can cause children, even those who have not experienced violence, and the need for appropriate follow-up support for children and their caretakers.

73. **Malta** commented that academic institutions involved in research on children should also be made aware of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the ethical issues around the collection of data on children.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

74. Chapter 6 has been edited to emphasize the challenge of protecting confidentiality and obtaining reliable data in settings where the reporting of abuse is mandated.

75. The chapter has been edited to reflect comments by Australia and Mexico.

76. The Task Force welcomes the comment from Malta and agrees that much of the content of the Guidance is relevant not only for NSOs but for other agencies and institutions involved in data collection and the production of statistics on children.

F. Chapter 7: Conclusions, recommendations, and further work

77. **Austria, Finland and Slovakia** expressed support for the conclusions and recommendations of the Guidance.

78. **Italy** suggested clarifications around the use of the UNICEF-WG CFM in other regions and certain differences across countries that may be difficult to overcome such as legal regulations.

79. **Italy** proposed that further guidance on the implementation of tools and survey instruments recommended in the Guidance would be beneficial.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Force

80. The Guidance has been edited to reflect the changes suggested by Italy.

81. The Task Force welcomes the proposal by Italy, which aligns with action items for future work proposed in the Guidance.

IV. Conclusion

82. Countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the Guidance, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided during the consultation. No country or organization opposed endorsement.

V. Proposal to the Conference

83. In view of the strong support expressed by countries and international organizations, the Conference is invited to endorse the Guidance, including changes made based on the consultation, as highlighted in the amended version of the Guidance. The Conference is also invited to support the proposals for further work in Chapter 7 of the Guidance.
