

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2022/2023 Bureau
Cork (Ireland), 12-13 October 2022

Item 3 (c) of the Provisional
Agenda

FURTHER WORK ON STATISTICS ON CHILDREN

Prepared by UNECE

*In June 2022, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the Guidance “Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with disabilities” and requested the Bureau to advise on priorities for further work. This note lays out proposal to hold an expert meeting for the focal points on statistics on children in national statistical offices, other relevant national agencies, and international organizations. **The Bureau reviewed the proposal and approved the proposed next steps.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 70th plenary session in June 2022, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the Guidance *Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with disabilities* and requested the CES Bureau to advise on priorities for further work. To prepare for the Bureau’s discussion of this topic, the Secretariat invited the experts who participated in the Task Force on Statistics on Children and Youth to elaborate on the issues for further work described in the Guidance.

2. On 1 September, an online meeting was held with the participation of Canada, Ireland, United States, OECD, UNICEF and UNECE. Based on the discussion held at that meeting, the UNECE Secretariat compiled the present note, with inputs from all the mentioned countries and organizations, referred to in the text as the drafting group.

II. FURTHER WORK IDENTIFIED IN THE GUIDANCE

3. The Guidance *Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with disabilities* established that the work to produce internationally standard and comparable statistics on children and youth is in its infancy. In addition to the recommendations to national statistical offices, the Guidance identified altogether 13 directions for further work which could be undertaken at the international level (section 7.3 of the Guidance). These range from developing statistical definitions of children and youth to resolving rather specific methodological issues, such as guidance for survey design and data collection on children with disabilities. Also included are the exchange of national experiences and best practices, and structured collaboration among international organizations producing statistics on children.

4. The drafting group found that at this point in time when the Guidance is freshly issued (its launch as an official United Nations publication is expected in October), it is of central importance to promote it, ensure that national statistical offices (NSOs) and relevant line ministries understand

the recommendations contained therein, and find ways to implement them. The drafting group assessed that a broad exchange among countries and better understanding of the expertise available in national statistical offices would be needed before attempting a creation of a task force on any of the specific methodological issues mentioned in the Guidance.

III. PROPOSAL TO HOLD AN EXPERT MEETING

5. The main way forward proposed at this stage is **to hold an expert meeting** for focal points on statistics on children in national statistical offices, other relevant national agencies, and international organizations. Such a meeting would provide a platform to support countries in the implementation of the Guidance and a vehicle to advance methodological work on the priority areas identified. The meeting would build on networks of experts recently convened by UNICEF and OECD.

A. Existing networks

6. [TransMonEE](#) is a three-decade-old partnership initiative among NSOs across Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia that—guided by the [Child Rights Monitoring Framework for Europe and Central Asia](#)—aims to strengthen the coverage, quality, disaggregation, accessibility, comparability and use of data on children. Led by UNICEF, the main comparative advantage of TransMonEE is to serve as a platform for discussions between NSOs as data producers and policymakers as data users. The initiative holds annual meetings to exchange good practices, share experiences, disseminate information on developments in technical areas and discuss methodological issues.

7. In July 2021, the OECD Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE) released the report [Measuring What Matters to Child Well-being and Policies](#), setting out a framework for the review of existing international data on children and highlighting data gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that all areas of children's well-being are measured. To assist with this agenda, the OECD has established an informal group of NSO focal points on data on children. The primary purpose of the group is to help push forward the child data agenda and improve the quality, comparability and availability of data on children.

B. Scope and timing

8. The proposed expert meeting would invite experts from these networks of OECD and UNICEF and expand the geographic scope to bring together all countries participating in the Conference of European Statisticians, ensuring region-wide exchange and facilitating coordination of international efforts of statistics on children. The meeting could be organized jointly by UNECE, UNICEF and OECD and take place in the first quarter of 2024. (The existing UNECE meeting commitments for 2023 would not allow an earlier timing.)

C. Topics

9. The topics covered in the expert meeting would reflect the recommendations and areas for future work presented in the Guidance *Statistics on Children: Spotlight on children exposed to violence, in alternative care, and with disabilities*. The most promising focus areas would be:

- (a) Administrative and linked data for statistics on children;
- (b) Implementation of the International Classification of Violence against Children;

- (c) Implementation in national surveys the Child Functioning Module (CFM) of UNICEF and the Washington Group.

10. The meeting would pave the way for further methodological work on these and other topics by identifying specific areas of need among national data producers, ongoing initiatives, and experts to contribute to work in specialized areas.

Administrative and linked data for statistics on children

11. The use of administrative, register-based, and linked data to fill information gaps on children is relatively new. Such data offer a potential for an efficient production of statistics for policy and program evaluation and research. Administrative data on children represent a valuable complement to traditional survey-based data sources, providing and improving indicators on child health, educational outcomes, family background, and local environments. Where linking across databases is possible, administrative data can provide valuable information on links between household and local environments and child outcomes. The longitudinal structure of many national registers makes it possible not only to consider relevant indicators precisely at times when they are most important for a child's development, but also allows evaluation over time of indicators within and across cohorts. Continuous collection also supports assessment of the impact of unexpected events such as pandemics and natural disasters. Crucially, administrative data are often the only data source for the most vulnerable children such as those living in alternative care or those experiencing violence.

12. Administrative data are often collected to fulfill specific planning and reporting needs; they are not always suitable for statistical purposes and rarely internationally comparable. The exchange of experiences and best practices among countries and international initiatives can encourage harmonization of concepts and methods, and facilitate collaboration around the aspects of administrative data use that are unique for children, including a) ethical issues such as consent, privacy, and confidentiality; b) legal frameworks for data sharing, data use, and linkages; c) harmonization of fundamental concepts; d) linkages to information on family and local environments; and e) variables for use in disaggregation.

Implementation of the International Classification of Violence against Children

13. The development of the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC) responds to a fundamental need for internationally-agreed concepts, definitions and principles to ensure a standardized and consistent approach to classify statistical data on violence against children. The aim of ICVAC is to provide a basis for statistics that are reasonably comparable between and within countries, and support the development of national classifications. The draft ICVAC underwent a comprehensive review by more than 200 experts from international organizations, national statistical offices, government entities and academia. It will be discussed at the meeting of United Nations Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications in October 2022. Based on the outcome of this review, ICVAC will be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission for endorsement in 2023. A dedicated session during a meeting of experts would be an important first step in building awareness among countries of ICVAC and supporting its implementation.

Implementation in national surveys of the Child Functioning Module (CFM) of UNICEF and the Washington Group

14. The UNICEF-Washington Group Child Functioning Module (CFM) has been internationally developed, tested, and validated and is currently used in several countries to

measure disability among children in a way that aligns with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The module focuses on difficulties in functioning, defined in terms of basic functions that are not influenced by culture or context, ensuring cross national comparability in the data. An important finding of the Guidance is that there is limited use of this module among countries participating in the CES.

15. Further work is necessary to investigate the existing barriers to implementation of the CFM in the region and to consider whether adaptations of the module to increase use are methodologically sound. The work currently being undertaken by Eurostat to test elements of the WG question set in the European Health Interview Survey could provide insight into the implementation of the module in broader-based household surveys. The exchange of country experiences in data collection on children with disabilities including those using the CFM would be an important step towards broader adaptation of this validated tool.

IV. ACTION REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

16. **The Bureau is invited to review and discuss the proposed follow-up activity – expert meeting – and decide on next steps.**

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