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Item 3(b) of the provisional agenda

Matters relating to the Conference

of European Statisticians: decisions on matters

relating to the Conference of European Statisticians

Decisions relating to the Conference of European Statisticians

Background

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its seventy-first session on 22–23 June 2023 in Geneva. The report of the session is contained in document ECE/CES/105.
2. In June 2023, the Conference adopted the programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2024, as contained in documents ECE/CES/2023/16 and ECE/CES/2023/16/Add.1.
3. The Conference of European Statisticians decided to establish the following task forces for the period 2024–2025:
 - (a) Task Force on measurement of well-being;
 - (b) Task Force on hard-to-reach groups in administrative data sources.
4. The Task Forces are created by the Conference and its Bureau to accomplish tasks with concrete deliverables and within a definite period of time, after which they cease to exist. The Task Forces work mainly by email and teleconferences, and meet only on the occasion of relevant expert meetings. The creation of the groups has no budget implications for the United Nations Secretariat.
5. The Conference of European Statisticians further decided to extend the mandate of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) for the period 2024–2028.
6. The Executive Committee is invited to approve these decisions.
7. Further, the Conference encouraged the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe) to conclude a new collaboration agreement for the period 2024–2026, similar to the agreement for 2021–2023.



Draft Decision

8. The Executive Committee hereby approves the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2024, as contained in documents ECE/CES/2023/16 and ECE/CES/2023/16/Add.1.

9. The Executive Committee hereby approves the terms of reference of the following task forces established under the Conference of European Statisticians, as contained in the annexes to the present document:

(a) Task Force on measurement of well-being for the period 2024–2025 (see annex I);

(b) Task Force on hard-to-reach groups in administrative data sources for the period 2024–2025 (see annex II);

(c) High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics for the period 2024–2028 (see annex III).

10. The Executive Committee welcomes the renewal of the partnership agreement between the ECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe for the period 2024–2026.

Annex I

[English only]

Terms of reference for the Task Force on measurement of well-being

I. Background

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in February 2023 conducted an in-depth review of the measurement of well-being. The review was based on a report prepared by Israel with contributions from Mexico, Netherlands, OECD, and the UNECE Secretariat (document ECE/CES/2023/7). The review focused on the measurement of current well-being in a national context, often referred to as well-being 'here and now'. When used in this note, 'well-being' refers to well-being here and now.

2. Since the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report on measurement of economic performance and social progress (2009), there has been a growing interest in measuring well-being. Measures of well-being have attracted much attention in the media and from policy makers. More recently, the demand for information about citizens' well-being was accentuated during the Covid-19 pandemic. The in-depth review revealed broad interest in the measurement of well-being but also challenges and different practices among countries that produce well-being indicators.

3. In the survey carried out as part of the in-depth review, 30 out of 39 countries that replied compile well-being indicators. National frameworks draw to a large extent on the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, the OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress and Eurostat's Quality of Life Indicators. While these frameworks follow a multidimensional approach there are differences in terms of typology and definitions, and the selection of dimensions and indicators. National frameworks are mainly developed for national purposes and tailored to the specific context and intended use in countries. Hence, national frameworks differ in the selection and definitions of dimensions and indicators.

4. A range of methodological differences and challenges are linked to the compilation of well-being indicators. These include the calculation of objective and subjective indicators, different approaches to measuring inequalities and the aggregation of individual indicators into composite measures.

5. A variety of data sources are used across countries. Most well-being indicators rely only or to a great extent on annual data and are released to the public with a considerable time lag compared to the reference period. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more timely indicators for households' well-being and the need to examine and exploit new data sources, including, e.g., big data and social media.

6. The communication of well-being indicators is also considered a challenge in many countries. Well-being statistics can be disseminated in various ways: as individual indicators, as a scoreboard, by use of composite measures, or a combination of these. Because of the complexity and multidimensional nature of well-being the communication should be carefully planned and may involve consultation with stakeholders and user groups.

7. The Bureau welcomed the report which was found comprehensive and helpful in directing further work on measurement of well-being. The Bureau noted that several frameworks for measuring well-being exist, including those of OECD and Eurostat, the SDGs and 2025 SNA. Further work should take existing frameworks as a starting point and focus on synthesizing these into operational guidelines to assist countries in producing well-being indicators.

8. The guidelines should focus on core indicators across the dimensions of well-being where harmonisation and improved international comparability is feasible. The guidelines should clarify typology, provide definitions, and give guidance on data sources, compilation

methods and communication. The guidelines should give leeway for national frameworks to adapt to country needs and allow inclusion of country specific indicators.

9. The guidelines should be forward looking. In the drafting of the guidelines, it will be important to coordinate with ongoing work, including on Beyond GDP, the SDGs and the update of the SNA.

10. In conclusion, the CES Bureau supported establishing a task force to develop guidelines on measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing well-being indicators. The Task Force's terms of reference were adopted at the 2023 October Bureau meeting.

II. Mandate

11. The Task Force on measurement of well-being reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from 2024 to 2025.

III. Objective

12. The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidelines on measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing multidimensional well-being indicators.

IV. Planned activities and outputs

13. Taking into consideration findings of the in-depth review, the guidelines should:

(a) Take existing frameworks as starting point and focus on synthesizing these into operational guidelines to assist countries in producing well-being indicators;

(b) Focus on core indicators across the dimensions of well-being where harmonisation and improved international comparability is feasible;

(c) Clarify the typology and provide definitions;

(d) Provide guidance on calculation methods, measurement challenges and data sources, including utilisation of (new) data sources and ways to improve timeliness;

(e) Provide guidance and examples of good practices in dissemination and communication of current well-being measures.

14. In developing the guidelines, the Task Force should consider existing frameworks and materials relevant for measuring well-being, including the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, the OECD framework for measuring well-being and progress and Eurostat's quality of life indicators. The guidelines should give leeway for national frameworks to adapt to country needs and allow inclusion of country specific indicators.

15. The guidelines should be forward looking. In the drafting of the guidelines, it will be important to coordinate with ongoing work, including on Beyond GDP and the SDGs. The Task Force should also take into consideration the work on measuring well-being in the update of the SNA and other relevant materials.

16. To solicit further information and inputs from countries, the Task Force should consider organising a seminar for national experts to share experiences and good practices in measuring current well-being.

17. The Task Force is planned to present its full report at the February 2025 meeting of the Bureau. The Task Force will finalize the report based on comments from the Bureau and will take into consideration feedback received from the electronic consultation among all CES members. Subject to Bureau approval and positive outcomes of the consultation, the report will be submitted to the 2025 CES plenary session for endorsement.

V. Methods of work

18. The Task Force will primarily work via email and online meetings. UNECE will create a wiki page for exchange of materials. It is proposed to have a face-to-face meeting of the Task Force back-to-back with the proposed seminar in June 2024.

VI. Membership

19. The following countries and organisations have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Armenia, Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, OECD, UNICEF, UNSD and Leiden University (Netherlands). Israel has agreed to chair the Task Force. Other CES members and international organizations are welcome to express their interest to become a member of the Task Force.

20. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the Task Force.

Annex II

[English only]

Terms of reference for the Task Force on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources

I. Background

1. Across all areas of social statistics as well as some areas of economic statistics there is a widespread and rapid trend towards the use of administrative sources, either to complement traditional census and survey sources, or to replace them. This shift has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic during which NSOs have had to seek out administrative sources to make up for the absence or shortcomings of data collected by traditional means. There are many advantages to this overall trend, including reduced respondent burden, faster production of statistics, and the concomitant reduced costs. There are of course also well-known drawbacks, such as a dependence on the content of administrative sources and the challenges in gathering data on subjective characteristics or other variables that are not recoded in administrative sources.

2. The drive to ‘leave no-one behind’, enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has come to provide the backdrop for many efforts at improving the quality and coverage of statistics. Calls abound for multiple disaggregation of data, to permit analysis of the impacts of intersecting vulnerabilities. Yet many of the dimensions along which users would like data to be disaggregated concern population groups that are considered to be ‘*hard-to-reach*’: that is, groups that tend to be under-represented either because they are numerically very small; because they are hard to identify, e.g. due to a lack of standardized definitions or because of a lack of data collection on the relevant variables; because they choose not to be identified, e.g. due to stigma associated with group membership; because they are systematically excluded from standard collection techniques and sampling frames, e.g. people living in institutions; because they are physically hard to reach, e.g. those living in remote areas or without a fixed abode; or because they are hard to enumerate even once identified and sampled, e.g. people living with dementia, people who do not speak the national language, and young children.

3. The general shift towards use of administrative sources for censuses and surveys heightens some of the challenges encountered when trying to safeguard and improve the availability of data and statistics on hard-to-reach groups. Some examples include: ensuring inclusion of the primary and secondary homeless and undocumented migrants in statistics derived from administrative registers; representing marginalized ethnic, religious and gender minorities and people with disabilities in statistics if administrative sources are not able to or do not routinely capture these characteristics; and producing sex-disaggregated statistics to permit gender analysis of crucial topics such as poverty, when the administrative sources used to provide the information are gathered at the level of the household rather than the individual.

4. The term “hard-to-reach” is often used with reference to specific variables that are lacking in administrative sources, rather than to population groups that are totally lacking from the administrative sources. The two issues are interlinked and both deserve to be investigated.

5. These challenges in producing statistics on hard-to-reach groups are not necessarily unique to administrative sources, and some of them are outweighed by other challenges seen when using traditional sources. At a time of gathering momentum towards administrative data-based social statistics, however, the Bureau felt the need to discuss the implications of this trend, and how the efficiency gains offered by the shift risk being offset by these challenges unless ways to overcome them are explicitly developed.

6. In February 2023, the Bureau carried out an in-depth review on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources, based on a paper by Denmark, with contributions by Canada, Italy,

New Zealand and United States (ECE/CES/2023/6). The Bureau supported further work in this area and agreed with the establishment of a new task force, as recommended in the paper.

7. In October 2024, the Bureau reviewed and adopted the Terms of Reference for a task force on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources (hereafter called the Task Force), as presented in this note.

II. Mandate

8. The Task Force on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from 2024 to 2025.

III. Objective

9. The objective of the Task Force is to investigate what types of hard-to-reach groups are there in different countries, considering both persons that are totally lacking from the administrative sources (unit non-response), and variables lacking in the administrative sources (item non-response). The Task Force should also investigate ways aimed at improving the access to hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources.

10. The Task Force should try to identify cross-cutting issues faced by countries and focus on specific groups particularly relevant for policy purposes, such as homeless, undocumented immigrants or other groups, depending on the findings.

11. The delimitation of hard-to-reach populations could serve as a point of departure for further investigation of whether there is a common ground for an analysis of how to better identify those groups in administrative sources. If such a common ground is lacking, the Task Force should identify best practices in getting access to hard-to-reach populations in administrative sources in different countries.

12. Based on the findings of its work, the Task Force could develop basic principles, focusing on certain policy relevant groups, such as people with a disability, migrants, ethnic minorities, homeless, children, and older persons

IV. Planned activities and outputs

13. The Task Force will carry out the following activities:

(a) Delimit the range of hard-to-reach groups and identify selected specific groups that are particularly relevant for policy purposes.

(b) Collect information and material on existing experience in national statistical offices on the availability of data and statistics on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources, focusing on the groups identified in activity a;

(c) Investigate whether there is a common ground for an analysis of how to better identify those groups in administrative sources, develop basic principles and if possible, a conceptual framework;

(d) Draft a report on the work conducted and the main findings, including a list of good practices in getting access to hard-to-reach populations in administrative sources in different countries.

V. Methods of work

14. The Task Force will primarily work via e-mail, wiki workspace, and online meetings. No face-to-face meeting of the Task Force are planned.

VI. Membership

15. The following statistical offices have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Canada, Denmark (Chair), France, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, OECD, UNICEF and UNSD. Other countries and organizations are welcome to join the Task Force.
16. UNECE will provide the Secretariat to the Task Force.

Annex III

[English only]

Terms of reference for the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics

I. Background

1. In the past, several existing international groups were involved in expert-level discussions on specific aspects of the modernisation of official statistics, such as methodology, information technology, software tools and enterprise architecture, but there was no overall coordination of these activities. This is why in 2010, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) decided to set up a forum at the level of chief statisticians: the group that is now the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS).
2. HLG-MOS provides a strategic vision for the modernization work and regularly updates its implementation strategy to stay abreast of the latest developments. The first vision was adopted by CES in June 2011. The terms of reference were reviewed in 2013, 2017, and 2020. The mission, values and vision were updated in 2018 and 2022.
3. The current terms of reference reflect a confirmation of the role and responsibilities of HLG-MOS based on experience gained so far.

II. Mandate

4. HLG-MOS reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). It therefore derives its legitimacy and mandate from this body. It prepares annual progress reports about recently accomplished and planned work, to inform and solicit comments from CES and its Bureau.
5. HLG-MOS defines its mission, provides a mid- and long-term vision, identifies priority areas and decides on the overall strategy. The activities under HLG-MOS are supported by a governance structure. This structure includes the Executive Board, expert groups, projects and expert meetings.
6. HLG-MOS identifies concrete tasks or activities to support its work that could be undertaken by groups of experts. Depending on the resources available and the capacity of the UNECE secretariat, up to four of such Modernisation Groups can be active. Their mandate and focus are revised regularly. The Groups are usually set up for a period of at least three years. After having verified the interest by a sufficient number of CES member countries and the availability of resources, HLG-MOS may establish new sub-groups.
7. HLG-MOS identifies two annual projects to expedite work in emerging areas. These projects are chosen from proposals submitted to and approved by the Executive Board after having verified the interest by a sufficient number of CES member countries. Projects can normally be extended by maximum one year.
8. HLG-MOS oversees up to four regular Expert Meetings to share and discuss emerging issues and innovative practices, and to identify topics for future work in cross sectional topics of statistical production. It can mandate workshops to share the work and get input in current activities.
9. HLG-MOS tasks the Executive Board with implementation and monitoring the work programme of the HLG-MOS groups and projects, and with identifying and proposing new activities. HLG-MOS oversees its work and provides leadership and direction to the Executive Board.

10. These terms of reference are valid until December 2028, after which they will be reviewed by the CES Bureau.

III. Objective

11. The mission of HLG-MOS is to oversee development of models, frameworks and sharing of information, tools and methods that support the modernisation of statistical organisations. The aim is to improve the efficiency of statistical production processes, and the ability to produce outputs that better meet user needs. HLG-MOS will discuss and collaborate with other bodies involved in related work, both within and beyond the official statistics community. Within the official statistics community, it will take a leadership and coordination role.

12. HLG-MOS will oversee and steer the work of relevant CES expert groups, and will coordinate and give leadership where needed, to other relevant international expert groups and United Nations regional commissions. It is responsible for stimulating development of standards and guidelines with global impact and overseeing activities undertaken in collaboration.

13. The objectives of HLG-MOS are:

(a) To promote common standards, models, tools and methods to support the modernisation of official statistics;

(b) To drive new developments in the production, organisation and management of official statistics, ensuring effective coordination and information sharing within official statistics, and with relevant external bodies;

(c) To advise the CES Bureau on the direction of strategic developments in the modernisation of official statistics and ensure that there is a maximum of convergence and coordination within the community of official statistics.

IV. Planned activities and outputs

14. Each year in November, HLG-MOS decides on priority projects for the next year and activities undertaken by its sub-groups.

15. The main activities and outputs are:

(a) To frame a collective strategy on developments related to the modernisation of statistical production and services, and to formulate and disseminate new ideas, proposals and projects in this field;

(b) To organise annual workshops and meetings with representatives of relevant expert groups and projects, to help identify key priorities and tasks to implement the vision and strategy;

(c) To determine an annual list of key priorities and their timeframes, and allocate them to relevant expert groups or projects. The resources will be drawn from consenting CES members;

(d) To make the results of its work public via the UNECE website or a wiki site and other communication tools;

(e) To maintain and support implementation of the necessary standards and models to support the modernisation of official statistics;

(f) To actively promote relevant standards, methods and tools.

V. Methods of work

16. HLG-MOS will meet at least once per year, usually back-to-back with other events. If needed, in-between meetings, it will work mainly via electronic communication and

telephone or video conferencing. The continuous oversight is delegated to the HLG-MOS Executive Board that will monitor progress and alignment with the HLG-MOS mission, vision and priorities and meet online on a monthly basis and when needed ad-hoc.

17. The results of annual collaborative activities and projects in key priority areas will be released at the end of each year.

18. A review, and, if necessary, revision of the key models and standards for statistical modernisation will be conducted on a regular basis.

19. CES plenary sessions will annually review the progress of work under HLG-MOS.

VI. Membership

20. The HLG-MOS members are at the level of heads (chief statisticians) of national and international statistical organisations. An appropriate geographical balance in the membership of HLG-MOS will be ensured.

21. The members of HLG-MOS undertake to devote the necessary time to adequately discharge their duties. Members will contribute according to their capacity sufficient in-kind or financial resources to execute the annual work programmes.

22. The members of HLG-MOS will select from amongst themselves a Chair for the term of two years. The term as a Chair is renewable for another two years.

23. The following countries and organizations will participate in the HLG-MOS: Canada (Chair), Australia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, Eurostat, OECD, and UNECE.

24. Members of the CES Bureau may participate in HLG-MOS meetings as observers.

25. HLG-MOS may invite additional persons to participate in some or all of its activities, depending on priorities and interests, where their contributions would be of benefit to the work of the Group. These persons shall be representatives of other national or international organisations which demonstrate their commitment to actively contribute to the work of HLG-MOS and support the implementation of the strategy.

26. UNECE will provide the secretariat for HLG-MOS.
