



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 April 2024

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Seventy-second plenary session

Geneva, 20 and 21 June 2024

Item 11 (a) of the provisional agenda

**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 2023

Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

The document provides a short summary of the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2023. The annex includes the list of meetings organized in 2023. The document is submitted to the Conference for approval.



I. Introduction

1. The objective of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) statistics subprogramme is “to advance official statistics at the national and international levels for evidence-based policymaking and assessing progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to ensure the coordination of statistical activities in the ECE region under the Conference of European Statisticians” (A/78/6 (Sect. 20)).
2. The work is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) 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 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (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), 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 CES in 2023 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, 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 and monitoring SDGs*, adopted by CES in 2015.

UNECE Statistical Programme – objective and areas of work



II. Description of the main accomplishments in 2023

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

6. In 2023, the Bureau of the Conference reviewed in-depth four statistical areas: (i) measurement of current well-being; (ii) hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources; (iii) social cohesion; and (iv) use cases for alternative population bases, 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. The papers for [in-depth reviews](#) (including the ones carried out previously) are available on the UNECE website.

7. These reviews have already led to the following further work:

(a) Setting up a Task Force to develop guidelines on the **measurement of well-being** for countries that produce or consider producing well-being indicators. The Task Force is expected to finalize its report in 2025;

(b) Setting up a Task Force to work on identifying the types of **hard-to-reach groups** in different countries, and collect best practices in using information on hard-to-reach populations from administrative sources. The Task Force is expected to finalize its report in 2025;

(c) Collecting information on how the concept of **social cohesion** is measured in different countries and identifying good practices, to be finalized by October 2025.

8. **Integrating statistical and geospatial data**, particularly in the context of statistics for SDGs, has increasing importance. Following up on the support by the Executive Committee of UNECE to this direction of work, UNECE has developed a closer partnership between the statistical and geospatial communities in the region. For a number of years, UNECE, the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Europe (UN-GGIM:Europe) and Eurostat have organized annual meetings on the integration of statistical and geospatial information. Wider communication networks have been established by sharing information on contacts, including on SDGs and population and housing censuses.

9. A joint UNECE, Eurostat, UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop on Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Data was held in October 2023. It brought together experts from national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies, and fostered stronger links between statistical and geospatial communities across the UNECE region, facilitated greater collaboration and encouraged greater integration of geospatial and statistical information by promoting stronger institutional partnerships and the use of common standards.

10. Work on standards issues related to the integration of statistical and geospatial information started in 2023. The work brings together representatives from national statistical and geospatial organizations to discuss the current use of standards, explore any issues and constraints, and identify priorities and future actions regarding the use of standards to improve the harmonization and interoperability of statistical and geospatial information.

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 2023, 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 dashboard – available in English and Russian – is for the general public and for policymakers as an easy way to see where their country stands among other countries of the region with respect to the implementation of SDGs.

13. In 2023, the annual report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region entitled “*Growing challenges for sustainable development: can the UNECE region turn the tide in 2023?*” was prepared. According to the report, the UNECE region is on track to achieve only 21 SDG targets by 2030. For 79 targets, progress must accelerate if the targets are to be met, while for 15 targets, the current trend needs to be reversed. In addition to the overall progress assessment, the publication contains stories provided by agencies, United Nations country teams, and all UNECE programmes, showing concrete ways in which progress towards SDGs is made in the region. The 2024 report is in preparation and is planned to be launched in February 2024.

14. 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.

15. In 2023, 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 publications page.¹ The following guidelines were endorsed in 2023:

- (a) *List of behaviours demonstrating the implementation of the core values and the Fundamental Principles in practice*;
- (b) *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem* clarifying the terms related to data stewardship and public data governance, and the tasks of NSOs that this may include in different settings;
- (c) *Joint UNECE/OECD guidelines for measuring circular economy. Part A: Conceptual framework, statistical framework and indicators* presenting the draft conceptual framework, a statistical framework and a proposed indicator set for monitoring progress towards a circular economy, including examples of measurement frameworks used by countries, and other regional and national examples of measuring the circular economy;
- (d) *Measuring hazardous events and disasters: set of core disaster-risk-related indicators* recommended for regular production by NSOs to (a) strengthen evidence for disaster risk; (b) inform about the state of disaster risk in an internationally comparable way; (c) support monitoring and reporting on international policy agreements; (d) ensure consistency and coherence of information across administrative boundaries, and (e) add value to existing statistics.

16. UNECE developed these outputs in cooperation with countries and the following partner organizations: Bank for International Settlements, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), European Environment Agency, Eurostat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IMF, OECD, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNSD, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the World Meteorological Organization, the World Resources Institute and the University of Extremadura.

17. The Statistical Division, in cooperation with UNSD, has developed a detailed *Inventory of Thematic and Extended Accounts*, offering comprehensive insights into the economic accounts published by countries worldwide. The inventory provides information and links to about 950 accounts from almost one hundred countries, covering around 40 different topics, such as environment, tourism, culture, digital economy, human capital, unpaid household work, healthcare, water, timber, waste, energy, minerals, etc. The inventory was launched in January 2024.

18. In response to a growing recognition of the transformative power of **Large Language Models** (LLMs), an advanced AI system that understands and generates texts at a human-like level, a white paper *LLMs for Official Statistics* was developed. The paper brought together various national and international statistical organizations working on LLMs, sharing practical use cases in the context of official statistics, exploring the potential of this fast-changing technology and discussing the way forward for responsible use of LLMs. Furthermore, based on experiences and lessons learned from statistical organizations, *Cloud for Official Statistics* explored the main themes related to the use of Cloud such as procurement, security and capacity.

19. In 2023, UNECE Task Forces have prepared the following outputs for submission to the 2024 CES plenary session for endorsement (subject to a positive outcome of a wide consultation before the plenary session):

- (a) *Role of national statistical offices in achieving national climate objectives* – guidance on how NSOs can contribute to achieving national climate objectives, identifying concrete ways in which NSOs can be involved and showcase what the statistical system already offers to support climate action;

¹ <https://unece.org/publications/statistics>

(b) *Subjective poverty measures* – a guide on measuring subjective poverty, including a set of subjective poverty indicators that could be used for international comparison;

(c) *The Generic Statistical Information Model* (GSIM, version 2.0) – an updated version of GSIM.

20. Under the auspices of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) three priority projects were carried out in 2023: (i) Cloud for Official Statistics; (ii) Extension for Data Governance Framework for Interoperability; and (iii) ModernStats Carpentries (phase two of the 2022 Meta Academy Project). These activities are in addition to the work of the core subgroups on Applying Data Science and Modern Methods, Supporting Standards, Capability and Communication, and the Blue Skies Thinking Network.

C. Capacity development

21. 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.

22. UNECE capacity-development activities include:

- **Assessments of national statistical systems and sector reviews**
- Capacity-development **workshops**
- **Advisory services** to address country-specific needs
- Development of **methodological guidance and training materials**
- **Field projects** implemented in partnership with national statistical offices and United Nations country teams.

23. Special attention is paid to promoting the *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* which provide the basis for a sound legal and institutional framework for national statistical systems.

24. 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 CIS-STAT, ESCAP, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Eurostat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNSD, the World Bank, and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

25. The assessments of national statistical systems (Global Assessments) or specific sectors are the key activities in the area of capacity development. Global Assessments are carried out in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA and are used by various donors active in the region, such as the World Bank. The reports provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. They help national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to focus their technical cooperation activities on the identified needs. The Assessments have resulted in action plans to improve national statistics in all countries where they have been conducted. In 2023, Global Assessments were conducted in Georgia and in Kazakhstan. Additionally, sectoral reviews were carried out in Georgia on the implementation of a process-based statistical production and Republic of Moldova on the national statistical IT infrastructure.

26. High-level meetings for Chief Statisticians and deputies from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, were organized in 2023 to support national missions and visions with respect to modernizing the role and organization of national statistical

offices, for example with respect to data stewardship and governance, statistical legislation, and the use of new data sources.

27. A United Nations Development Account project that started in 2022, in partnership with UNSD, other United Nations regional commissions, UNEP and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), continued throughout 2023. The project's aim is to support post-COVID-19 recovery and innovation, for example using big data sources for producing consumer price indices and job vacancies, using administrative and other registers as a basis for the national household and population census, multidimensional poverty measurements, improving measuring the quality of employment, improving the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA), environmental and climate change and disaster-related statistics, moving to a process-based organization, or in modernizing national statistical legislation. A range of workshops and other statistical capacity-development activities were carried out, including an interregional Expert Meeting on Data Governance for Chief Statisticians (jointly with ESCAP), workshops and expert meetings on population censuses, poverty, financial accounts and climate change-related statistics.

28. UNECE is also implementing externally funded projects. One example is a project funded by the Russian Federation to strengthen statistical capacity of the CIS countries in providing high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, with the focus on environment statistics. With support from the project, meetings on environmental statistics and indicators and climate change-related statistics were held.

D. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe statistical database

29. 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
- Clearing house for migration statistics for the CIS countries
- Country overview tables and tables with a country ranking and country profiles, charts and maps.

30. 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.

31. To reduce the response burden on countries, data are collected from, or in cooperation with, other international organizations when possible. UNECE has continued its work to streamline the database activities, which has increased efficiency of data collection and facilitated timelier update and release of statistical data series. Further improvements are expected in the work related to the database maintenance, such as usage of various Python-based statistical software packages, and data processing through the data science approach. It is expected that using the Python programming language will shorten the software development time and free human resources for design of visually attractive and easy-to-use web applications.

32. In 2023, 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.

33. The database provides the source data for the report for the annual UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, and for preparing 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.

34. 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 Statistical Division

35. 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>
- [Inventory of Thematic and Extended Accounts](#): information and links to about 950 accounts from almost one hundred countries
- Links to official statistical organizations: <https://unece.org/statistics/partners>.

36. 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 2,000 active users. All the wikis and knowledge bases on different subjects can be found at: <https://statswiki.unece.org>.

III. Cooperation with other organizations

37. 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.

38. Many international organizations contributed to the CES work in 2023. 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. The sections below list partner organizations in addition to the CES Bureau members.

A. United Nations organizations

39. The following United Nations organizations can be mentioned:

(a) All United Nations 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 Africa (ECA) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) – 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;

(b) International Labour Organization (ILO) – measuring quality of employment and consumer prices, revision of standards for statistics on informality, 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;

(c) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) – capacity development in gender statistics and gathering harmonized statistics for the SDG indicator on gender equality in local government;

(d) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – collaborating on statistics on gender in trade and use of new data sources;

(e) United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) – collaboration in the organization of annual Expert Fora for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics, and close collaboration in drafting guidelines for measuring hazardous events and disasters with official statistics;

(f) United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) – collaborating to align geospatial and statistical standards and initiatives;

(g) 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 United Nations Country Teams;

(h) United Nations Climate Change (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat) – improving climate change-related statistics;

(i) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – long-standing support for UNECE work on population and housing censuses;

(j) United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) – work on statistics on children and youth;

(k) International Organization for Migration (IOM) – capacity development on migration statistics;

(l) World Meteorological Organization – hazardous events and disasters.

40. As part of a United Nations Development Account project coordinated by UN DESA, UNECE is working alongside seven other United Nations entities (UN DESA, UNEP, UNODC and the four other regional commissions – ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA) to support national statistical systems to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and increase their resilience to future disasters.

41. UNECE also works through a United Nations Geospatial Network with over 30 other United Nations agencies on the management of geospatial information.

B. Other regional and international organizations

42. The following partners outside of the United Nations System can be mentioned:

(a) Asian Development Bank – on economic statistics;

(b) Eurasian Economic Commission – on statistics for SDGs and economic statistics;

- (c) 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 in a wide range of statistical areas;
- (d) European Environment Agency – on climate change-related statistics;
- (e) Global Forum for Geography and Statistics – using statistical and geospatial information;
- (f) International Energy Agency (IEA) – climate change-related statistics;
- (g) PARIS21 – statistics for SDGs, climate change-related statistics;
- (h) Data Documentation Initiative – development and integration of standards for modernization of official statistics;
- (i) Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) – hazardous events and disasters, statistics for SDGs.

C. Academia

43. The following organizations from the academia can be mentioned:

- (a) University of Oxford's Poverty and Human Development Initiative (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) – work on poverty measurement;
- (b) University of Geneva (Switzerland) – business registers and globalization;
- (c) Deakin University (Australia), Delft University of Technology (Netherlands), 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 (United States of America), IT Center for Science (Finland), privacy Analytics (Canada), Sarus and Knexus Research (United States) – various projects and activities related to modernization of official statistics;
- (d) University of Extremadura (Spain) – disaster-related statistics.

IV. Meetings organized in 2023

44. In 2023, the UNECE Statistical Division organized 27 meetings and workshops presented in the annex. Documents for public meetings are available at the [UNECE meetings web pages](#).

Annex

List of meetings held from January to December 2023

Key events of the Conference of European Statisticians from January to December 2023

<i>Jointly with</i>	<i>Meeting (venue)</i>	<i>Date</i>
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	15–16 February 2023
OECD	Joint OECD-UNECE Seminar on Implementation of SEEA (Geneva, Switzerland)	13–15 March 2023
Eurostat, IEA	Joint UNECE/IEA/Eurostat Webinar on Administrative Microdata for Climate Change, Energy and Environment Statistics	30 March 2023
	Group of Experts on Statistics for SDGs (Geneva, Switzerland)	12–13 April 2023
	Group of Experts on National Accounts (Geneva, Switzerland)	25–27 April 2023
UNEP, European Union, STATEC Luxembourg, Austrian Environment Agency	Regional training on air quality and emissions to air statistics and indicators	4–5 May 2023
	Workshop on Gender Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	9 May 2023
	Group of Experts on Gender Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	10–12 May 2023
	Machine Learning for Official Statistics Workshop (Geneva, Switzerland)	5–7 June 2023
All regional commissions, UNSD, UNDRR	Third Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics (Bangkok, Thailand)	5–7 June 2023
ILO	Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices (Geneva, Switzerland)	7–9 June 2023
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection (online)	12–14 June 2023
	Conference of European Statisticians seventy-first plenary session (Geneva, Switzerland)	22–23 June 2023
	CES seminars on data ethics, and timeliness, frequency and granularity of official statistics (Paris, France)	28 June 2023
EFTA, Armstat	Workshop on the Generic Law of Official Statistics (Yerevan, Armenia)	4–5 July 2023

<i>Jointly with</i>	<i>Meeting (venue)</i>	<i>Date</i>
	Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	28–30 August 2023
	Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	18–19 September 2023
	Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	20–22 September 2023
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Confidentiality (Wiesbaden, Germany)	26–28 September 2023
	CES Bureau meeting (Cardiff, United Kingdom)	9–10 October 2023
EFTA	Workshop on Financial Accounts for EFTA partner countries (Brussels, Belgium)	9–11 October 2023
	Expert Meeting on Dissemination and Communication of Statistics (Lisbon, Portugal)	11–13 October 2023
	Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (Geneva, Switzerland)	16–17 October 2023
	HLG-MOS Workshop on the Modernisation of Official Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	21–22 November 2023
	Workshop on Harmonization of Poverty Statistics to Measure SDG 1 and 10 (Geneva, Switzerland)	27 November 2023
	Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality (Geneva, Switzerland)	28–29 November 2023
UNDRR, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations University (UNU)	COP28 Side Event: Enabling climate action through data, transparency and finance (Dubai, United Arab Emirates)	5 December 2023