ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

108th meeting
Geneva, 16 December 2019

Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2019/41**

Meeting with the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians

The Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians, Ms. Marjo Bruun, is pleased to submit her report to the 108th meeting of EXCOM on 16 December 2019.

The report presents highlights of the work undertaken in support of statistical development and the measurement of SDGs, covering achievements since the previous report in December 2017 and the major activities planned for 2020 and beyond. More information is contained in the report of the sixty-sixth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians, held in Geneva from 18 to 20 June (document ECE/CES/95) and the sixty-seventh plenary session, held in Paris from 26 to 28 June 2019 (document ECE/CES/97). A detailed description of the activities planned for 2020 is provided in the UNECE Statistical Programme 2020 (document ECE/CES/BUR/2019/OCT/14).

I. Introduction

1.   The objective of the UNECE statistical sub-programme is "to advance official statistics at the national and international levels in the region". This objective encompasses all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since it is designed to improve monitoring across all policy areas.

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 OECD member countries. The Heads of statistical organizations of Brazil, China, Colombia, Mongolia and South Africa also actively participate.

3.   The Statistical Division which acts as secretariat for CES works in close collaboration with international organizations active in statistics in the region, such as the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The Chief Statisticians of these organizations participate in the work of the CES Bureau to ensure coordination of work and avoid duplication. The work of CES also responds to the global initiatives of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), which sets the global statistical standards.

4.   The CES work assists the national statistical systems in producing high-quality statistics and data in an increasingly interconnected, dynamic and digitized world.

5.   The data revolution of the last several years has significantly impacted statistical work with the increasing digitization of information and the emergence of big data. The rapid change in technology, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, and the use of data analytics and data science have created opportunities for statistical offices. Furthermore, the use of new data sources, such as administrative data and big data (satellite imagery and geo-spatial data, and data from mobile phones, scanners and social media) can increase the speed and efficiency of production and the quality of their statistical products. However, making use of such sources requires new methodologies and skills, and comes with the challenges of obtaining access to the data, securing a legal basis for such access, maintaining confidentiality, and the cost of handling vast amounts of data.

6.   The data revolution has also changed stakeholders' expectations and generated demand for more open data, available faster, and accessible through web portals and sharing platforms. New data providers emerge and publish non-official statistics, which compete with official statistics although they may not follow the same standards of methodological and

ethical rigour. In this increasingly competitive environment, national statistical offices need to maintain their relevance and remain the trusted information providers.

7. With the rapidly changing data ecosystem, the legislative and institutional infrastructure must also evolve. Change is needed to support the development of new business models, new partnerships and use of new sources and technologies. Such change is crucial to modernize official statistics and release the full value of official statistics.

8. All statistical work of UNECE is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since it supports member States in measuring and communicating progress towards the 2030 Agenda. This is in accordance with the *Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring SDGs*[a], adopted by CES in 2015.

II. Achievements since the last session

A. Streamlining international statistical work on emerging issues

9. The Bureau of the Conference has reviewed six statistical areas in-depth 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 statistics in the UNECE region. These reviews have led to the development of practical recommendations for countries to address the emerging challenges. The following reviews were undertaken within the last two years: measuring social exclusion; gender identity; international migration and cross-border mobility; various types of satellite accounts; use of satellite image data in official statistics; and statistics and data on cities. All review papers are available on the UNECE website.[b]

10. Furthermore, integrating statistical and geospatial data, particularly in the context of statistics for SDGs, has increasing importance. Following up on the support by EXCOM to this direction of work, UNECE has developed a closer partnership between the statistical and geospatial communities. A good example of this is a decision to hold a joint session of the Conference and the UN-GGIM: Europe in 2020.

B. New methodological guidelines and recommendations

11. Since 2018, CES has endorsed ten statistical guidelines and recommendations, developed by dedicated teams of specialists. These teams of specialists are set up by CES for a particular task with concrete terms of reference, timeframe, output and a sunset clause. All the statistical guidelines and recommendations are prepared in close collaboration with main international partners, in particular Eurostat, OECD, IMF and UN/DESA. All guidelines and recommendations are available on the UNECE website[c]. The following are some highlights from among the recently-produced guidelines:

(a) *Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation* defines common elements and requirements for modern legal frameworks to guarantee flexibility, independence, integrity and accountability of national statistical systems and ensure high quality of official statistics. While the Guidance was published in 2018, nine countries from the UNECE region and beyond (Albania, Armenia, Chile, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Norway, Republic of Moldova,

---

[a] See: http://www.unece.org/publications/ces_sust_development.html
[b] See: http://www.unece.org/stats/ces/reviews.html
[c] See: http://www.unece.org/statistics/publications.html

Slovakia and Switzerland) have already used or plan to use it in reviewing and revising their statistical laws.

(b)   *Guidelines on Producing Leading, Composite and Sentiment Indicators* provide guidance on good practices in an area which is new for many statistical offices. The guidelines clarify the possible roles of statistical offices in producing such indicators and provide operational guidance. Fifty countries across the globe have reported that they plan to use the Guidelines to develop, or improve these indicators in their countries.

(c)   *Guidance on Data Integration for Measuring Migration* and *Measuring International Labour Mobility* are both part of the series of guidelines that UNECE has produced over the years to improve migration statistics. These documents provide practical guidance on the definitions, methods and data sources, and present good practices and country case studies. UNECE has been promoting the approach of integrating data from different sources to obtain official estimates of migration. Currently twenty-six countries use this approach, following the UNECE guidelines.

(d)   *Guidelines on the Use of Registers and Administrative Data for Population and Housing Censuses* cover operational, practical, technical and legal aspects of using multiple data sources for censuses, in particular register and administrative data. They also provide methods and good practices for measuring coverage and quality of the various sources. In the 2020 round of decennial censuses, for the first time in history, all UNECE countries have taken a decision to conduct a census, following the *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 censuses of population and housing*. This is the result of the continuous work of UNECE in promoting and developing capacity for the census as a unique data source for all population-related statistics, including a majority of SDG indicators.

(e)   *Recommendations on the Role of Official Statistics in Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters* clarify the role of official statistics in this area and identify practical steps how national statistical offices can support disaster management and risk reduction. Statistical offices have a lot of information at their disposal that could be used for disaster risk reduction. Some statistical offices are already fully involved but many offices are looking for guidance to build knowledge and capacity in this new area of work which is also important for tracking progress towards fulfillment of the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction and SDGs.

12.   The remaining four recommendations are: *Guidelines on the Use of Statistical Business Registers for Business Demography and Entrepreneurship Statistics; Strategic Communications Framework; Satellite Account for Education and Training: Compilation Guide;* and *Recommendations on Measuring Older Populations in Institutions.*

13.   Under the CES High-level Group for the Modernization of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS), new versions of three models have been endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians that support the modernization of statistical production: the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM), and the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO). These models provide a universal language that allows statistical offices to develop common tools using the same reference framework. GSBPM has become a global de facto standard for statistical business processes which is used by several international organizations and at least 45 countries in UNECE region and beyond. GAMSO and GSBPM are also used as the basis for structuring the global *Handbook of Statistical Organizations* currently in preparation by the UN Statistics Division (New York).

C.   Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

14.   The work of the UNECE Statistics sub-programme is fully aligned with SDGs in support of national statistical offices as providers and national coordinators of statistics on SDGs. Measuring progress towards SDGs is a big challenge for the national statistical offices. The data on the 232 global SDG indicators come from many different national and international sources and have to be provided to over 50 international organizations responsible for the SDG indicators. The CES *Road Map on Statistics for SDGs* guides this work in countries.

15.   A number of practical tools were prepared in 2018-2019 to facilitate use of the Road Map. Two reports give practical guidance to countries on setting up web platforms for providing statistics on SDGs: *National Reporting Platforms: A Practical Guide* and *National Mechanisms for Providing Data on Global SDG Indicators*. As a result, thirty-five countries in the UNECE region have currently set up a National Reporting (or similar) platform for data on SDGs.

16.   Two observational pilot studies of data flows from countries to custodian agencies responsible for SDG indicators were carried out to develop ways to streamline this process and to investigate why the data provided by international organizations for a country and the country itself often differ. Thirty-seven countries and ten international custodian agencies participated in this voluntary pilot. The outcome contributed to the development of the principles and best practices of data flows endorsed by the 50th UN Statistical Commission at the global level. Following the UNECE example, a number of countries in Africa and in ESCAP region carried out similar exercises.

III.   Major activities planned for 2020 and beyond

17.   The statistical work of UNECE will focus on the following priority areas: (i) statistics for SDGs; (ii) economy and globalization; (iii) population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality; (iv) environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters; and (iv) strategic and managerial issues and modernization of official statistics. Capacity development in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia will focus on areas highlighted by the assessments of national statistical systems in these countries.

18.   The cooperation with the geospatial communities will continue to better integrate statistical and geospatial data, by holding joint expert meetings and capacity development activities. A joint session of the Conference and the UN-GGIM: Europe in 2020 will discuss the main challenges and proposed next steps for better integration of statistical and geospatial data, aiming to identify concrete steps forward that could be taken jointly by the official statistics and geospatial community within the UNECE region.

19.   At its annual plenary sessions the Conference focuses on topics selected by the Heads of statistical offices to address their most pertinent current challenges. One of the main topics in 2020 will be "Implementing the role of NSOs in an era of expanded possibilities*",* in a session co-organized by Denmark and the High-level Group for Modernization of Official Statistics. The Conference will consider strategies for NSOs in new data ecosystems and how statistical organizations can develop a concrete action plan to put these strategies into practice.

20.   The second main topic at the 2020 CES plenary session will involve strategic reflections on "Impacts of globalization and digitalization on the future of economic statistics", in a session co-organized by Canada, Finland and Norway. The activities of multinational enterprise groups (MNEs) illustrate the challenges faced by official statistics in adequately covering cross-border phenomena and, consequently, ensuring the quality of

major economic indicators. The Conference will discuss issues arising from globalization and digitalization, and opportunities around international data exchange among MNEs.

A. Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

21.   The statistical work of UNECE supports national statistical offices to facilitate country-led reporting of statistics for SDGs. In addition, work will continue in 2020 to build a UNECE regional platform for data on SDG indicators.

22.   The annual reporting of 232 indicators for the 17 SDG goals and 169 targets to fifty agencies across the United Nations system and beyond (the custodian agencies) requires unprecedented coordination in statistical methodology, data flows and communication that cuts across goals and thematic domains. To guide countries in this work, a Steering Group composed of 17 countries, Eurostat, OECD and CIS-Stat, and co-chaired by Poland and Sweden is currently developing a second edition of its widely used *CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs* (UNECE, 2017)[d] to reflect new information, lessons learned, and emerging challenges. The second edition of the Road Map, to be released in 2021 will include practical tools and country case studies, and will pay special attention to disaggregated data to leave no-one behind. Guidance will be also developed to help countries in preparing the statistical annexes to the Voluntary National Reviews to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to ensure that these reviews are data driven and evidence based.

23.   UNECE secretariat, guided by a group of countries led by Denmark is setting up a knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs and a regional platform for data on SDG indicators. The Knowledge Hub is a source of detailed technical information, including guidance produced by the various CES teams of specialists and links to other resources for statisticians. It will be a useful resource for experts[e].

24.   The regional platform for data on SDG indicators is set up as a response to requests from two sources. The first is the UN Development System reform, which calls for consolidation of existing data and statistics capacities in regions, and for the development of coherent regional data ecosystems. The second is the decision of the UNECE session in April 2019 to consider progress towards SDGs at the annual Regional Fora on Sustainable Development based on a regional statistical report using existing data sets and statistics.

25.   A dashboard of selected SDG indicators will provide information on the UNECE countries' progress in achieving SDGs. The dashboard will be targeted towards a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats. The data will be stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata. The dashboard is planned to be released in February 2020.

B. Economy and globalization

26.   UNECE will continue working with countries to improve the quality and comparability of economic statistics, which are a prerequisite for the compilation of many global SDG indicators, including all those with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the denominator. The main priority areas for 2020 include measuring economic growth, well-being and sustainability; globalization; and human capital.

---

[d] See: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2017/ECECESSTAT20172.pdf. The Road Map is available also in Russian and Spanish.
[e] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/Statistics+for+SDGs+Home

27. UNECE promotes the use of the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) to enable the provision of high-quality data for economic analysis and policies under the Global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA. UNECE also contributes to the global SNA research agenda on measuring globalization, digitalization, well-being and sustainability. The CES Group of Experts on National Accounts will continue to play an important role in the implementation of the System of National Accounts in the region and facilitate the exchange of best practice among the CES member countries and beyond.

28. Data exchange is a promising and perhaps the only avenue for achieving a comprehensive insight into the activities of multinational enterprises, global production and international trade. In 2020, a CES Task Force led by Finland will finalize the guidance, tools and principles for the exchange of economic data based on enablers and obstacles identified in a review of current data exchange practices.

29. In 2020, UNECE will continue its work on measuring human capital by promoting the use of the *Satellite Accounts on Education and Training. Compilation Guide* in countries. This will ultimately lead to better measurement of how skills and knowledge acquired through education and training influence economic growth and productivity.

30. UNECE, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD and other partners, promotes the implementation of international recommendations on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which plays an important role in policymaking and is widely used for indexation of wages, pensions and social security allowances. The biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on CPI in June 2020 will discuss new data sources for CPI, and the role of CPI in measuring the digital economy and welfare.

31. Together with Eurostat and OECD, UNECE supports the development of statistical business registers which are indispensable for efficient data collection and production of economic statistics. UNECE will continue to support the implementation of the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* (2015) and *Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics* (2019) in national statistical offices.

32. UNECE, jointly with Eurostat, ILO and OECD, will continue to lead the international work on measuring quality of employment which aims to respond to the demand for data on the qualitative aspects of employment beyond traditional labour force statistics.

C. Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequalities

33. The work on social and demographic topics in 2020 will focus on poverty and inequalities, migration, gender and population and housing censuses. Many challenges relate to the need to increase the use of administrative data and to measure hard-to-reach population groups. Work on social and demographic statistics is particularly important for monitoring progress towards SDGs, since many indicators require population data in the denominator and should be disaggregated by sex, migratory status and other variables.

34. The UNECE Statistical sub-programme supports countries' preparations for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, which represent the very foundation of statistical systems. Censuses cover the entire population and allow the production of statistics for various small population groups whose measurement is essential to ensure that 'no one is left behind' in progressing towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda. There are increasing concerns over costs, data quality, respondent burden and privacy, which call for new and more efficient methodological solutions. Since an increasing number of countries plan to use administrative sources in the 2020 census round, a UNECE task force is preparing *Guidance on the measurement of the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses.*

35.   UNECE promotes exchange of experience and methodological work on measuring poverty and inequalities. Measuring progress towards SDGs on the reduction of poverty (Goal 1) and inequalities (Goal 10) requires comparable data and a coherent set of indicators. The task force on disaggregated poverty measures will complete its work in 2020. UNECE will continue to promote the use of the harmonized survey module for measuring poverty in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

36.   UNECE aims to improve the availability, quality and international comparability of migration statistics in line with first objective of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the demands related to SDGs. Work will be completed on the guidelines on how to incorporate longitudinal data into annual migration statistics. New work is planned to be started on using new data sources (including big data) for measuring migration and cross-border mobility.

37.   The work on gender statistics aims to share knowledge and experience and to develop capacity in areas where data and indicators of gender equality are insufficient or lacking. In 2020, two task forces will complete their work on developing guidance for statistical offices: on measuring the gendered dimensions of intra-household power and decision-making, and on the communication of gender statistics to policymakers and the public. A team of experts led by the United Kingdom will also be analyzing emerging practices in measuring gender identity.

D.   Environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters

38.   The main priorities in 2020 will include climate change-related statistics and indicators, environment statistics, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and statistics related to hazardous events and disasters. These statistics are highly relevant for environment policies and required to derive many SDG indicators. Among the three pillars of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – data availability for the environmental pillar is the lowest, especially for countries with less developed statistical systems.

39.   UNECE supports the use of the global System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) in the region, jointly with OECD. The work in 2020 will focus on use of SEEA for measuring SDGs, climate change and other policy applications, focusing on the circular economy, environmental goods and services and ecosystem accounting.

40.   In 2020, the UNECE Steering Group on climate change related statistics, led by Luxembourg will continue supporting countries in implementing the *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-related Statistics* (2014), especially the set of core climate change-related indicators and indicators of climate change adaptation.

41.   Waste statistics are of high policy interest in relation to many policy areas: SDGs, the green economy, resource efficiency, the circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, climate change and many others. However, there are important conceptual and methodological problems in this area that lead to incomparability of data, and important aspects of waste management (such as informal and illegal activities) being not included in official waste statistics. In June 2020, CES is expected to endorse a conceptual framework for waste statistics, which will allow to improve the quality of information for waste-related policies.

E.   Strategic and managerial issues and modernization of official statistics

42.   In 2020, the first UNECE/Eurostat Expert Meeting on modernizing statistical legislation will collect experience and best practices, and provide a forum to discuss emerging issues and challenges for statistical legislation. UNECE supported by a task team led by the United Kingdom will continue to promote and disseminate the CES *Guidance on*

modernizing statistical legislation (UNECE, 2018) to enable continuous development of statistical systems, guarantee independence and accountability, and ensure data security and high quality of statistics.

43.   Following up on the *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics* (2017), in 2020 a UNECE Task Force will pilot test the approaches to measure the value of official statistics. The best practices are intended to inspire statistical offices to increase the value of statistics, and the pilot testing, in turn, will help to demonstrate that value in concrete terms. The pilot testing will help to refine the measurement framework and provide practical guidance to countries wishing to use the framework.

44.   UNECE works with countries to create models, standards, frameworks and guidelines to assist them in their modernization and collaboration efforts. The CES High-Level Group for the Modernization of Statistics (HLG-MOS) steering this work consists of a group of thirteen committed Chief Statisticians, led by Canada who work together to identify trends, threats, and opportunities in modernizing statistical organizations.

45.   In 2020, the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in statistical production will remain a priority topic of work under HLG-MOS. The objective will be to explore how different NSOs integrate machine learning in their production processes, to report on the different practices and sources of impediments, and to identify successful practices.

46.   Other main areas of work under HLG-MOS include:

(a)   Supporting practical implementation of the models developed under HLG-MOS and consolidating materials and practical examples to better communicate the models;

(b)   Sharing innovative practices in human resource management and training for statistical organizations;

(c)   Supporting innovation and assessing new opportunities for official statistics.

G.   UNECE statistical database

47.   UNECE operates a statistical database offering key statistics on member countries via free online interfaces in English and Russian. Emphasis is placed on providing data on areas of high political importance to governments and to the United Nations system, such as issues relating to migration, globalization, gender equality, population, education, employment, work-life balance, road traffic accidents, inland transport, and forest resources.

48.   In 2020 a major expansion of the database will be launched for SDG indicators, including a dashboard of SDG indicators, as described in para 25. To reduce the response burden on countries, data are collected from, or in cooperation with, other international organizations when possible.

49.   The database provides the source data for publications such as *UNECE Countries in Figures*, as well as for preparing regular short articles on economic and social development in the UNECE region, published in the UNECE Weekly newsletter and on the UNECE website.

IV.   Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

50.   The Conference of European Statisticians does not have standing bodies (Working Parties) since 1997. The work of the Conference is undertaken by steering groups or task forces created for the fulfilment of a particular initiative of the member States. All teams of

specialists work according to detailed terms of reference with a concrete timetable and deliverables. The CES Bureau regularly reviews the progress of work of the groups, and they cease to exist upon completion of their task.

51.   The following ten teams fulfilled their mandate in 2018-2019 and therefore ceased to exist:

(a)   Task Force on leading, composite and sentiment indicators

(b)   Task Force on education satellite accounts;

(c)   Task Force on measuring older populations in institutions;

(d)   Task Force on reporting SDG indicators using National Reporting Platforms

(e)   Task Force on entrepreneurship statistics

(f)   Task Force on register-based and combined censuses

(g)   Task Force on data integration for measuring migration

(h)   Task Force on measuring labour mobility

(i)   Task Force on measuring extreme events and disasters;

(j)   Task Force on common elements of statistical legislation

52.   The sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh plenary sessions of the Conference endorsed the mandates of the following groups:

(a)   Steering Group on gender statistics;

(b)   Steering Group on migration statistics;

(c)   Steering Group on climate change-related statistics;

(d)   Steering Group on measuring quality of employment;

(e)   Task force to test and further develop the framework for measuring the value of official statistics;

(f)   Task Force on measuring the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses;

(g)   Task Force on measuring social exclusion.

53.   In view of the importance of the issues discussed by the Expert Group on national accounts and the standing nature of its work, and to ensure the continuity of work, the Conference agreed (document ECE/CES/95, paragraph 75) to a resource neutral change by converting the Expert Group on national accounts, convened as an ad-hoc meeting, into a standing team of specialists under the Conference in accordance with the UNECE Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists (doc. ECE/EX/2/Rev.1, item 3 (h)). The Conference adopted the terms of reference for the Expert Group on national accounts (ECE/CES/2018/11) and recommended to present these to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

54.   The Conference also endorsed the Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2020, as contained in document ECE/CES/2019/15.

55.   The Executive Committee is invited to adopt the decisions listed in paras 52-54.

V. Inter-sectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing inter-sectoral activities

Statistical database

56.   The Statistical Division provides the necessary database infrastructure required by other UNECE divisions. For instance, the data collected by UNECE Transport and Forestry Divisions are maintained and accessible via the online UNECE statistical database. The Statistical Division coordinates the UNECE data production for consistency of data and terminology, and maintains the technology and methods used for data collection, storage and dissemination.

Sustainable Development Goals

57.   The CES work on statistics for SDGs contributes to the UNECE Nexus on Measuring and Monitoring Progress towards SDGs, led by the Statistical Division and coordinated by the Environment Division. Moreover, the Statistical Division acts as the UNECE focal point for the global SDG indicators and liaises with UNSD/DESA on related issues.

Environment

58.   The work of CES on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, climate change-related statistics and environmental statistics feeds into the UNECE Nexus on Sustainable use of natural resources.

59.   The intersectoral activity on environmental statistics and indicators carried out jointly with the Committee on Environmental Policy assists the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as South-East Europe to strengthen and harmonize environmental statistics. The terms of reference of the joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics were renewed by EXCOM in July 2018.

60.   In 2018 and 2019, the Statistical Division carried out joint training workshops on forest accounts and energy statistics jointly with UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and with Sustainable Energy Division.

Disaster risk reduction

61.   The Statistical Division collaborates with the UNECE focal point on disaster risk reduction in the work related to measurement of hazardous events and disasters.

Cities

62.   The UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit contributed to the in-depth review on statistics and data on cities carried out by the CES Bureau.

VI. Technical cooperation activities

63.   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, and South-East Europe, 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.

64.   UNECE capacity development activities include:

- Assessments of national statistical systems

- Capacity development workshops

- Advisory services to address country-specific needs

- Development of methodological guidance, survey tools and training material.

65.   Capacity development activities are carried out in partnership with other international organizations, in particular with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNSD, Eurostat, EFTA, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

66.   In 2018, CES endorsed a new *UNECE Statistical Capacity Development Strategy*, which reinforces the principle that capacity development activities should be user driven. In 2018 and 2019, UNECE carried out 17 regional and 10 national training workshops for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia with the support of the regular budget, the budget for technical cooperation, funding from the United Nations Development Account and external funding sources.

67.   In addition, several advisory missions were conducted at the request of countries. With these activities, UNECE supported countries' capacity to develop statistical systems for monitoring progress towards SDGs, to provide gender-sensitive indicators, and to fill gaps identified in assessments of national statistical systems.

68.   These activities contributed to progress in areas identified for improvement in assessments of national statistical systems. These assessments analyze the progress of countries with developing statistical systems in implementing international standards and the degree of compliance with the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*. They are carried out at countries' request jointly with Eurostat and EFTA. In 2018 and 2019, the assessments of national statistical systems in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Uzbekistan were completed, and an assessment of national statistical system in Belarus was launched.

69.   To address member States' requests for assistance in implementing the CES recommendations, UNECE has been carrying out two United Nations Development Account (UNDA) projects[f] to strengthen the capacity of countries for the sustainable development of statistics in the sub-region. UNECE also carries out some externally funded projects, for instance a project funded by the World Bank to "enhance coherence and integration of economic and social statistics in support of the implementation of 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA)".

70.   A new capacity development project funded by the Russian Federation was launched in 2019. The project will run from 2019 to 2021 to support the CIS countries to provide high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, with a special emphasis on environment statistics.

---

[f] The title of the UNDA 9th tranche project is "Supporting the implementation of the global assessment recommendations in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia", and the title of the UNDA 10th tranche project is "Programme on statistics and data to build countries' capacity for monitoring progress towards SDGs".

71.   A detailed description of capacity development activities undertaken by the secretariat under the Conference of European Statisticians in 2018 is presented in the Annual Report on UNECE Technical Cooperation Activities 2018.[g]

VII.   Cooperation with other organizations

72.   The Conference and its Bureau maintain very good cooperation and close working contacts with the other international organizations active in statistics in the ECE region. Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), the International Monetary Fund (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.

73.   In total, 35 international organizations contributed to the work of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2018 and 2019. The cooperation takes the form of joint meetings, joint capacity development projects or activities, partnership in developing recommendations and guidelines, and contribution to the work of the CES Task Forces. In addition to the organizations that are members of the CES Bureau, the following partners can be mentioned:

United Nations organizations

    (a)   Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) – developing statistical capacity across all statistical domains, including climate change, SDG-related indicators and economic statistics;

    (b)   International Labour Organization (ILO) – measuring quality of employment and ensuring that economic and social statistics align with labour-related international standards and definitions;

    (c)   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) – providing statistics for hazardous events and disasters;

    (f)   United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe) – 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;

    (h)   UN Climate Change (the UNFCCC secretariat), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and European Environment Agency (EEA) – improving climate change-related statistics;

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

---

[g] See: EXCOM Informal document No. 2019/21/Rev.1

(j)   United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – co-chairing the Issue-based Coalition on SDG Data and Monitoring, coordinating regional stakeholders from the UN system and beyond and starting work together in the area of statistics on children and youth.

74.   As part of a United Nations Development Account project coordinated by UNDESA, UNECE works alongside nine other United Nations entities (UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the four other Regional Commissions – Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ECLAC, ESCAP and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) to develop statistics and data for SDGs.

Other regional organizations

(a)   European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – supporting statistical work in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia through technical cooperation and capacity development activities;

(b)   The Gulf Cooperation Council – contributing to work on statistical modernization, dissemination and communication, and measuring the value of official statistics.

Academia

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

(b)   Moscow State University – harmonizing migration statistics across Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

(c)   Plakhanov Russian University of Economics – co-organizing and hosting a high-level seminar on statistics in the digital era;

(d)   Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia – co-organizing with the national statistical office a seminar on statistical measurement of intra-household power and decision-making;

(e)   United Nations University – developing a statistical framework for waste statistics.

Annex

Key deliverables and events of Conference of European Statisticians and its secretariat

I. Key outputs

Table 1
Key outputs of the Conference of European Statisticians in 2018 and 2019

Title	Year endorsed
Guidance on Data Integration for Measuring Migration	2018
Measuring International Labour Mobility	2018
Guidelines on the Use of Registers and Administrative Data for Population and Housing Censuses	2018
Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation	2018
Guidelines on the Use of Statistical Business Registers for Business Demography and Entrepreneurship Statistics	2018
UNECE Countries in Figures	2019
Guidelines on Producing Leading, Composite and Sentiment Indicators	2019
Strategic Communications Framework	2019
Recommendations on the Role of Official Statistics in Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters	2019
Satellite Account for Education and Training: Compilation Guide	2019
Recommendations on Measuring Older Populations in Institutions	2019

II. Key events

Table 2.
Key events of the Conference of European Statisticians from January 2018 to December 2019

Jointly with	Meeting (venue)	Date
	CES Bureau meeting (Helsinki, Finland)	14-15 February 2018
OECD	Seminar on implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) (Geneva, Switzerland)	21-22 February 2018
	High-level seminar on strategic partnerships in official statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	11-12 April 2018
	Workshop on ModernStats World (Geneva, Switzerland)	11-13 April 2018
	Expert meeting on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-19 April 2018
ILO	Group of Experts on consumer price indices (Geneva, Switzerland)	7-9 May 2018
OECD, Eurostat	Group of Experts on national accounts (Geneva, Switzerland)	22-25 May 2018

	66th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-20 (a.m.) June 2018
	Group of Experts on population and housing censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	26-28 September 2018
	Expert Forum for producers and users of climate change related statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	2-4 October 2018
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	14-15 October 2018
Eurostat	Work Session on migration statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	24-26 October 2018
UNECE Env. Division	Task Force on environmental statistics and indicators (Geneva, Switzerland)	25-26 October 2018
	Workshop on modernization of official statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	26-30 November 2018
	Expert meeting on harmonization of poverty statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	29-30 November 2018
OECD	Seminar on implementation of SEEA (Geneva, Switzerland)	20-21 February 2019
	CES Bureau meeting (Washington, D.C., United States)	28 February-1 March 2019
OECD, Eurostat	Group of Experts on national accounts: measuring global production (Geneva, Switzerland)	9-12 April 2019
	Expert meeting on statistics for SDGs (Geneva, Switzerland)	15-16 April 2019
	Work Session on gender statistics (Neuchâtel, Switzerland)	15-17 May 2019
	67th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (Paris, France)	26-28 a.m. June 2019
	ModernStats World workshop (Geneva, Switzerland)	26-28 June 2019
	Group of Experts on population and housing censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-20 September 2019
	Group of Experts on business registers (Geneva, Switzerland)	30 September-2 October 2019
	Expert Forum for producers and users of climate change-related statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	3-4 October 2019
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	16-17 October 2019
	Work Session on migration statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	29-31 October 2019
	Group of Experts on measuring quality of employment (Geneva, Switzerland)	6-8 November 2019
	Workshop on modernization of official statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	19-22 November 2019
	Expert meeting on measuring poverty and inequality (Geneva, Switzerland)	5-6 December 2019

III. Key projects implemented under the Conference of European Statisticians in 2018 and 2019

A. Strengthening capacity in the most vulnerable countries in the ECE region for the sustainable development of statistics – funded by UN Development Account (UNDA) 9th tranche

Objective: To enhance the national capacity of the most vulnerable UNECE countries for sustainable development of statistics through the implementation of recommendations from the Assessments of national statistical systems

Target group and beneficiaries: Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

Duration: 2014 – 2018

B. Programme on Statistics and Data – funded by UNDA 10th tranche

Areas: Means of implementation; Environmental pillar; Social and demographic pillar; Economic pillar.

Objective: To strengthen the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the sustainable development goals in an accurate, reliable and timely manner for evidence-based policymaking.

Duration: 2016 – 2020

C. Enhancing coherence and integration of economic and social statistics in support of the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts – funded by the World Bank ECASTAT project

Objective: To increase the capacity of countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in compiling national accounts and supporting statistics according to the recommendations of international statistical standards.

Target group and beneficiaries: National statistical offices, ministries of finance and central banks producing and using macroeconomic statistics in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

Duration: 2017 – 2020

D. Strengthening statistical capacity of the CIS countries for providing high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs – funded by the Russian Federation

Objective: to strengthen statistical capacity of CIS countries to provide high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, focusing on environmental statistics.

Target group and beneficiaries: National statistical offices and government agencies working on statistics for SDGs in the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Duration: 2019 – 2021