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Planning and reporting on the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics subprogramme

Biennial Performance Report for the biennium 2010-2011 of the Statistics subprogramme

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The note provides the 2010-2011 biennial performance report of the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics subprogramme. It presents the performance report in an aggregated way, harmonised with the United Nations biennial planning and evaluation framework. It complements the reports on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics Statistical Programmes for 2010 and 2011.

The note is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians for adoption. It was approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians.

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I. Introduction

1.   This biennial evaluation report is based on the biennial evaluation plan for 2010-2011. It presents an assessment of accomplishments and lessons learned for each cluster of activities of the Statistics subprogramme.

2.   The indicators of achievement for each expected accomplishments are reported for the end of each biennium unless otherwise indicated, for example, the number of Task Forces undertaking methodological work jointly with partners are calculated in December of each biennium.

II. Cluster 1: coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

A. Expected accomplishment

3.   Streamlined activity patterns of statistical work between international organizations through elimination of overlaps and gaps.

B. Indicators of achievement

4.   The number of Task Forces undertaking methodological work jointly with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), The Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and other international organizations.

  (a)   2006-2007: not available;

  (b)   2008-2009: 7 joint Task Forces;

  (c)   Target 2010-2011: 9 joint Task Forces (implemented 9).

5.   The number of international organizations regularly reporting their activities in the Database on International Statistical Activities (DISA)

  (a)   2006-2007: 27 organizations;

  (b)   2008-2009: 27 organizations;

  (c)   Target 2010-2011: 26 organizations (implemented 26).

C. Statement of accomplishments

6.   The international statistical work was reviewed in-depth in six areas. These include measuring information society, global manufacturing, improving household surveys, time use surveys, education statistics and use of new data sources. Inter-agency coordination to eliminate overlaps and gaps in statistical activities in United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region has also improved. Thus, 26 international organizations voluntarily provided information to the UNECE Database on International Statistical Activities, and 6 United Nations City Groups and inter-secretariat working groups, as well as the global Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) reported on their activities. The classification used in the UNECE database was recently adopted by the international consortium on Statistical Data and Metadata

eXchange, and the global inventory of statistical standards, maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division.

D.   Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

7.   Topics for in-depth reviews that will potentially lead to new work should be selected. The level of reporting to the DISA database has reached its saturation level as the main organizations active in statistics are covered. It requires continuous effort to improve visibility of the database and promote its use for coordination.

II.   Cluster 2: collection, processing and dissemination of macroeconomic statistics

A.   Expected accomplishment

8.   Increased availability of reliable, timely and comparable macroeconomic statistics, particularly about the less advanced countries of the region.

B.   Indicators of achievement

9.   Percentage of available data of good quality in the macroeconomic overview tables (percentage of filled data cells to the total number of data cells).

> (a)   2006-2007: 53 per cent (estimate in October 2006);
>
> (b)   2008-2009: 79 per cent;
>
> (c)   Target 2010-2011: 75 per cent (implemented 82).

10.   Percentage of users that express, through user surveys, satisfaction with the quality, coverage and timeliness of data contained in the UNECE macroeconomic database.

> (a)   2006-2007: 81 per cent;
>
> (b)   2008-2009: 84 per cent;
>
> (c)   Target 2010-2011: 80 per cent (implemented 81).

C.   Statement of accomplishments

11.   Progress was made in the availability of high quality macroeconomic statistics in the ECE statistical database. The timeliness, completeness, reliability and comparability of this dataset were improved. The percentage of database cells filled with good quality data was 82 per cent compared to 79 per cent in 2008-2009. The user satisfaction remained constant, with an online survey confirming that 81 per cent of users considered the quality of data as excellent or good. Information about salaries and employment were among the most searched data as were also the national accounts' data.

D.   Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

12.   'Percentage of filled data cells' does not reflect the amount of data: empty cells are created with new series. 'Increased number of statistical time series' better describes data

availability and will replace this indicator. User satisfaction has stabilized and cannot be improved with current resources.

III. Cluster 3: collection, processing and dissemination of social and demographic statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

13. Increased availability of reliable, timely and comparable social and demographic statistics with gender breakdown, particularly about the less advanced countries of the region.

B. Indicators of achievement

14. Percentage of available data of good quality in the social and demographic overview tables (percentage of filled data cells to the total number of data cells).

    (a)   2006-2007: 53 per cent (estimate in October 2006);

    (b)   2008-2009: 64 per cent;

    (c)   Target 2010-2011: 70 per cent (implemented 52).

15. Percentage of users that express, through user surveys, satisfaction with the quality, coverage and timeliness of data contained in the UNECE social and demographic statistics database.

    (a)   2006-2007: 81 per cent;

    (b)   2008-2009: 84 per cent;

    (c)   Target 2010-2011: 80 per cent (implemented 81).

C. Statement of accomplishments

16. Progress was made in the availability of high quality social and demographic statistics in the ECE statistical database. A Millennium Development Goals dataset covering the less advanced countries in ECE region was added to the database. The timeliness, completeness, reliability and comparability of this dataset were improved. The percentage of database cells filled with good quality data was 52 per cent compared to 64 per cent in 2008-2009. New indicators have been added for which less historical data are available. The user satisfaction remained constant, with an online survey confirming that 81 per cent of users considered the quality of data as excellent or good. Indicators on migration, health and education were among the most searched data in the database.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

17. Work is needed to improve completeness and comparability of data on the Millennium Development Goals. 'Percentage of filled data cells' does not reflect the amount of data: empty cells are created with new series. 'Increased number of statistical time series' better describes data availability and will replace this indicator. User satisfaction has stabilized and cannot be improved with current resources.

IV. Cluster 4: support for processing and dissemination of statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

18.   Improved functionality of the processing and dissemination infrastructure for statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

19.   Number of functionalities that were decided by the UNECE Database Coordination Group and successfully implemented.

    (a)   2006-2007: 3 new functionalities;

    (b)   2008-2009: 7 new functionalities;

    (c)   Target 2010-2011: 5 new functionalities (implemented 6).

C. Statement of accomplishments

20.   Data downloads in 2010-2011 were 26 per cent higher compared to the previous biennium which indicates improved usefulness of the statistical database. ECE automated data collection processes, which increased the timeliness and reliability of data. In total, six new functionalities were introduced to the database. These include user-driven calculations, automation of data uploads from Eurostat, hyperlinks between database text and definitions in the statistical glossary, new web interface with two improved visualization tools, UNECE maps and Quick Statistics, as well as enhanced data validation via the "Cubit" application. User support was improved also by adding a glossary of definitions to the database.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

21.   The increasing data downloads prove the relevance of the database. The ECE database coordination group will conduct user testing of the database web interface and identify the needed improvements. The automatic data updates developed should be extended to more statistical domains and more data sources. Further data validation tools should be developed to further improve the quality of data.

V. Cluster 5: methodological work in economic statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

22.   Increased development of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable economic statistics.

B.   Indicators of achievement

23.   The number of new and revised international standards and recommendations in the field of economic statistics endorsed by a statistical authority to which the ECE has contributed in substance.

> (a)   2006-2007: 1 standard or recommendation;
>
> (b)   2008-2009: 2 standards or recommendations;
>
> (c)   Target 2010-2011: 2 standards or recommendations (implemented 2).

24.   The number of statistical areas (according to the DISA classification) related to economic statistics in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

> (a)   2006-2007: 5 statistical areas;
>
> (b)   2008-2009: 6 statistical areas;
>
> (c)   Target 2010-2011: 6 statistical areas (implemented 6).

C.   Statement of accomplishments

25.   Over the 2010-2011 biennium, the ECE has coordinated the drafting of and contributed in substance to the development of two major statistical standards and recommendations in economic statistics:

> (a)   *The Impact of Globalization on National Accounts* (published by UNECE in 2011);
>
> (b)   Update of *Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics* (published by ECE in 2011).

26.   In addition, as part of capacity building activities, the ECE produced methodological materials comprising good practices in economic statistics, namely:

> (a)   *Practical Guide to Seasonal Adjustment, from source series to user communication* (published by ECE in 2011);

27.   The ECE also contributed in substance to methodological materials on the *Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices* (published by Eurostat in 2011).

28.   Overall, the ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 6 statistical areas related to economic statistics.

D.   Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

29.   The number of statistical areas in which ECE works can not be significantly increased due to limited resources. ECE considers carefully its involvement not to duplicate any work done elsewhere.

VI. Cluster 6: methodological work in social and demographic statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

30.   Increased development of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable social and demographic statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

31.   The number of new and revised international standards and recommendations in the field of social and demographic statistics endorsed by a statistical authority to which the ECE has contributed in substance.

   (a)   2006-2007: 1 standard or recommendation;

   (b)   2008-2009: 2 standards or recommendations;

   (c)   Target 2010-2011: 2 standards or recommendations (implemented 3).

32.   The number of statistical areas (according to the DISA classification) related to social and demographic statistics in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

   (a)   2006-2007: 10 statistical areas;

   (b)   2008-2009: 9 statistical areas;

   (c)   Target 2010-2011: 9 statistical areas (implemented 9).

C. Statement of accomplishments

33.   Over the 2010-2011 biennium, the ECE has coordinated the drafting of and contributed in substance to the development of three major statistical standards and recommendations in social and demographic statistics:

   (a)   *Developing gender statistics: a practical tool* (published by ECE in 2010);

   (b)   *Measurement of different emerging forms of households and families* (published by ECE in 2010).

   (c)   *Potential indicators for measurement of quality of employment* (published by ECE in 2010).

34.   In addition, as part of capacity building activities, the ECE produced methodological materials on social and demographic statistics comprising good practices, such as:

   (a)   *Review of Sources and Quality of Statistics on International Migration in selected countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States* (published by ECE in 2011);

   (b)   *Statistics on International Migration - A Practical Guide for Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia* (published by ECE in 2011).

35.   Overall, the ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 9 statistical areas related to social and demographic statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

36. The number of statistical areas in which ECE works can not be significantly increased due to limited resources. ECE considers carefully its involvement not to duplicate any work done elsewhere.

VII. Cluster 7: methodological work in environment and sustainable development statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

37. Increased development of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

38. The number of new and revised international standards and recommendations on environment and sustainable development endorsed by a statistical authority to which the UNECE has contributed in substance.

    (a)   2006-2007: 1 standard or recommendation;

    (b)   2008-2009: 1 standard or recommendation;

    (c)   Target 2010-2011: 1 standard or recommendation (implemented 0).

39. The number of statistical areas (according to the DISA classification) related to on environment and sustainable development in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

    (a)   2006-2007: 1 statistical area;

    (b)   2008-2009: 2 statistical areas;

    (c)   Target 2010-2011: 2 statistical areas (implemented 2).

C. Statement of accomplishments

40. Over the 2010-2011 biennium, the ECE worked in a joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force towards establishing standards and harmonization of the approaches to measuring sustainable development. This report is planned to be published in 2012 subject to the approval of the CES.

41. Overall, the ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 2 statistical areas related to environment and sustainable development statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

42. The work is driven by countries. Countries indicate a need for development of standards in areas not covered by other organizations. For example, work will be initiated on statistics related to climate change in the next biennium.

VIII. Cluster 8: methodological work on cross-cutting issues of official statistics

A. Expected accomplishment

43. Increased development of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable statistics.

B. Indicators of achievement

44. The number of new and revised international standards and recommendations on cross-cutting issues of official statistics endorsed by a statistical authority to which the UNECE has contributed in substance.

    (a) 2006-2007: 1 standard or recommendation;

    (b) 2008-2009: 2 standards or recommendations;

    (c) Target 2010-2011: 1 standard or recommendation (implemented 2).

45. The number of statistical areas (according to the DISA classification) related to cross-cutting issues of official statistics in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.

    (a) 2006-2007: 5 statistical areas;

    (b) 2008-2009: 11 statistical areas;

    (c) Target 2010-2011: 10 statistical areas (implemented 10).

C. Statement of accomplishments

46. Over the 2010-2011 biennium, the ECE has coordinated the drafting of recommendations on cross-cutting issues of official statistics:

    (a) *Making Data Meaningful Part 3: A guide to communicating with the media* (published by ECE in 2010);

    (b) *Using administrative and secondary sources for official statistics* (published by ECE in 2010).

47. Overall, the ECE undertook substantive methodological work in 10 statistical areas related to cross-cutting issues of official statistics.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

48. ECE considers carefully its involvement not to duplicate any work done elsewhere. To improve coordination of international statistical work in cross-cutting issues of official statistics, the CES decided to establish a High-Level Group on Business Architecture in Statistics.

IX. Cluster 9: progress in implementation of international standards and good practices by statistical systems, particularly in less developed countries of the region

A. Expected accomplishment

49.   Progress in implementation of international standards and good practices by statistical systems, particularly in less developed countries of the region.

B. Indicators of achievement

50.   The number of countries ensuring better compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics through adjustment of practices in their statistical systems.

  (a)   2006-2007: 6 new countries;

  (b)   2008-2009: 4 new countries;

  (c)   Target 2010-2011: 3 new countries (implemented 4).

51.   The number of ECE recommendations implemented to improve national institutional frameworks for official statistics.

  (a)   2006-2007: 45 recommendations;

  (b)   2008-2009: 40 recommendations;

  (c)   Target 2010-2011: 30 recommendations (implemented 37).

C. Statement of accomplishments

52.   In 2010-2011, ECE carried out 22 training workshops and a number of advisory missions to improve statistics in the less developed countries of the region. The progress in implementing international standards and compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is analyzed by Global Assessments of national statistical systems. ECE, with the Statistical Office of the European Union and the European Free Trade Association, carried out Global Assessments of national statistical systems at the request of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. As a result of assessments, a set of mutually agreed recommendations were identified and included in national action plans. The usefulness of the assessments is evidenced by four other countries, namely Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Tajikistan, requesting such an assessment in 2012. During this biennium, 37 recommendations were implemented by the countries of the region bringing them in better compliance with international standards and good practices.

D. Lessons learned/areas needing improvement

53.   Considering the progress achieved based on global assessments, the need for revision of national statistical legislation is considerably decreasing. In future global assessments, ECE will focus on supporting the national authorities in long-term planning of the development of their statistics and helping international donors in identifying countries' specific needs in building statistical capacity. Therefore, the current indicators of achievement will be replaced by 'the number of global assessments' and 'satisfaction with training workshops' in the next biennium.