



Economic Commission for Europe**Conference of European Statisticians****Sixtieth plenary session**

Paris, 6-8 June 2012

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Selection of topics for seminars to be held during the 2013 Conference of European Statisticians' plenary session**Proposal for the seminars to take place during the 2013 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians****Note by the secretariat**

1. In May 2012, the UNECE secretariat conducted electronically a survey to consult with the member countries of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and international organizations on possible topics for discussion at the 2013 CES plenary session. The results of the survey are presented in document ECE/CES/2012/18. The number of responses is a record high compared to previous years. A total of 51 responses were received, of which 44 from countries and 7 from international organizations.

2. The CES Bureau discussed at its short lunch meeting on 7 June 2011 the topics for the 2013 CES seminars and proposed to organise the seminars in 2013 on the following topics:

I. For the first seminar:

3. The following topic is proposed:

Topic 10: Challenges in providing access to microdata for research purposes

Seminar organiser: Slovenia

Session organizers: New Zealand, United States (possibly)

Contributions offered by: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, United States (possibly), Eurostat and OECD.

4. This topic was supported by 17 votes, all from countries.

5. The CES held a seminar on statistical confidentiality and microdata in 2003. Important developments have taken place during the ten years since then. The CES has

adopted and published two guidelines concerning confidentiality. The seminar in 2013 should take forward the common thinking in this area and present innovative approaches.

6. Providing access to microdata while ensuring adequate confidentiality protection remains a constant challenge. On one hand, the methods and technologies to manage confidentiality have significantly improved and more countries allow some form of access to microdata. On the other hand, the growing availability of microdata from official statistics and other sources can increase the risk of disclosure through the use of sophisticated data matching techniques. The seminar can be linked with the work of the High-Level Group on the Business Architecture in Statistics (HLG-BAS).

7. This seminar can focus on the following issues:

(a) Move from risk avoidance to risk management in the use of microdata for research purposes;

(b) The role of microdata provision as an important means to compete with other data producers;

(c) Strengths and weaknesses of strategies and methods for the release and exchange of microdata, including technical, procedural and legal aspects and differences in the approaches by countries;

(d) Special attention could be paid to access to business microdata;

(e) Specific issues relating to accessing and exchanging microdata across national boundaries, including international projects on this topic;

(f) New related developments outside official statistics, such as “data without boundaries” and changes in the management of national data archives.

II. For the second seminar:

8. The following topic is proposed:

Topic 1 combined with Topic 2: Challenges in implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and measuring sustainable development in follow-up to Rio+20

Seminar organizer: the Netherlands

Session organizers: Slovenia, Switzerland

Contributions: Australia, Azerbaijan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Eurostat and OECD

9. Topic 1 received 16 votes and topic 2 received 7 votes.

10. The more detailed description of the topic can be formulated after the Rio+ 20 Summit and the outcome of the discussion related to the post-2015 development goals and indicators. The Summit is expected to result in growing policy attention and follow-up actions to formulate and implement sustainable development policies. Sustainable Development Goals are being discussed as potential new targets to follow up on the Millennium Development Goals which end in 2015. The attention to indicators to monitor development in this area, therefore, will be growing. A lot of work is going on in this area by different initiatives and it will be good to get an overview of what is happening to align the different agendas.

11. The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted the SEEA as a standard in February 2012. An implementation strategy for the SEEA will be discussed at the next

UNSC session in 2013. The SEEA has a potential to generate a wide range of statistics and indicators, which need to be further adapted to countries' priorities and policy needs. The implications of the SEEA are important also through its links with National Accounts and other basic statistics.

12. The SEEA implementation raises many challenges to statistical offices. Some aspects are still problematic, such as the valuation of non-monetary stocks and flows, and the development of ecosystem accounts. The seminar should provide a forum for top managers of statistical offices to discuss and look for common solutions for the main issues in SEEA implementation.

13. The potential issues that could be discussed are (subject to the decision of the Bureau to take into account the outcome of the Rio+ and other related initiatives):

(a) Policy implications: obtaining policy support for implementation of SEEA as a core part of the work of NSOs; environment is often not a priority area: how to explain the wider significance of the data to gain support and interest from different stakeholders;

(b) The role of SEEA in understanding the linkages between economy and environment; links with sustainable development, climate change, green growth, etc;

(c) Implementation strategy: one approach is to implement SEEA step-by-step, starting from selected core accounts; Lack of standards in environment statistics is a barrier for development;

(d) Coordination within the statistical office, i.e. where data need to be integrated from different subject areas; Coordination with other institutions providing the necessary data, e.g. on water, energy, fisheries, forests, etc., the data come from many different organizations within a country;

(e) Challenges with data availability, a lot of work needs to be done in providing the basic statistics for the accounts (the subject areas are often focused on measuring output, not assets); Use of new tools for obtaining data (e.g. remote sensing), need to combine data sources;

(f) The need for a multidisciplinary approach by involving official statisticians, academia, economists, etc. Users of SEEA: research, policy makers, businesses; Challenge to disseminate the data and to explain it to different user groups, including media; Implications for human resources: improving knowledge of staff, it requires wide range of competencies (in environment, national accounts, etc.);

(g) The links of measuring sustainable development with subject-matter statistical areas, integration between the different dimensions of sustainable development: ecological, economic and social; Measuring the cross-border effects related to sustainable development.
