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**Economic Commission for Europe**

## Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 9(c) of the provisional agenda

**Outcome of the in-depth review of education statistics****Outcome of the in-depth review of education statistics****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This note informs the Conference of European Statisticians of the outcome of the in-depth review of education statistics conducted by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau in November 2011 based on a paper by Australia. As a follow-up to recommendations presented in the Australian paper, the Bureau decided to explore whether there is interest from countries in working on measuring e-learning and in compiling good practices on integrating administrative, survey and census data on education. The outcome of this exploration was further discussed by the Bureau in February 2012 and is summarised in this note.

The in-depth review of education statistics benefited from the discussion of this topic at the Conference of European Statisticians plenary session in June 2011. The updated in-depth review paper is available in document ECE/CES/2012/2.

## **I. Introduction**

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews each year selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. The review focuses on strategic issues and highlights concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.

2. The paper by Australia entitled “In-depth review of education statistics” provided the basis for the in-depth review. It was first presented at the 2011 CES plenary session. Considering the discussion at the plenary, a revised version was presented at the November 2011 meeting of the Bureau. The Bureau also considered written comments on the paper by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNECE, available at the following website:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2011.11.bureau.htm>.

## **II. Conclusions of the in-depth review paper**

3. The in-depth review paper delivered an assessment of key conceptual and coordination issues surrounding the production of quality education data and identified possible strategies for meeting the challenges faced by collectors and users of education statistics.

4. The paper identified the following issues that require further action by the international statistical community:

(a) The international community must continue to collaborate and discuss major issues affecting the collection and reporting of education statistics. Areas requiring further development and collaboration include the revision of the measurement and classification of human capital, social inclusion and early childhood education. The requirement for consistent definitions and measures of e-learning is also of growing importance in the international arena;

(b) Linking education data to other datasets (administrative and non-education based) to build a longitudinal picture of education pathways and transitions needs to be advanced through continued sharing of best practice of data linking methodologies, shared sources of data linkage, and the quality of linking and the research produced from linked datasets;

(c) Statistical bodies involved in the generation and use of education statistics should be making greater use of administrative data (if not already doing so), as well as gauging public attitudes towards its use for statistical purposes;

5. Furthermore, based on the discussion at the CES plenary session in June 2011 and subsequent feedback from selected member countries, the paper put forward three recommendations for progressing statistics on education and training:

(a) Establish an education-specific wiki that fosters further discussion in the international community about data collection methods, experiences, conceptual consistency and knowledge specifically about education and training;

(b) Create a framework or best practice guide for the appropriate use of administrative datasets in conjunction with other official statistics drawn from survey and census data;

(c) Form a small working group to investigate international practice in measuring e-learning, specifically looking at how e-learning is incorporated into national education systems for reporting purposes.

### **III. Summary of the Bureau discussion**

6. At its November 2011 meeting, the Bureau discussion revealed that there is a need for the follow-up actions proposed in the in-depth review paper. However, the Bureau also recognised that in some countries, e-learning is not a priority area of education statistics and that the amount of work needed for maintaining a wiki should not be underestimated.

7. It was noted that a lot of education statistics are collected outside statistical offices, which has led to the fragmentation of this statistical area. In some countries, it is difficult to access the data produced by different agencies. Such issues have to be resolved at national level.

8. With respect to the proposal to advance the measurement of the quality of education, the Bureau was informed of a new Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey on this topic, which should be considered when deciding on further work in this area. Plans for future work on education statistics would also have to consider the activities of the OECD Indicators of Education Statistics (INES) group that is developing and consolidating indicators.

9. At its November 2011 meeting, the Bureau decided to explore whether there is interest from countries in working on measuring e-learning and in compiling good practices on integrating administrative, survey and census data on education. The Bureau also decided to continue discussing education statistics with the involvement of UNESCO.

10. In response to the secretariat's investigation of interest in further work, five countries (Australia, Canada, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, United Kingdom) and OECD indicated interest in participating in a task force on e-learning. Eurostat would decide on its possible involvement after seeing the task force's terms of reference. Nine countries (Australia, Austria, Belarus, Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom), Eurostat and OECD indicated their readiness to share good practices in integrating administrative, survey and census data on education. No country or organization offered to lead the work.

11. At the February 2012 meeting of the Bureau, UNESCO informed about the implementation of the new International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as its priority and about the continuation of its annual data collection together with Eurostat and OECD.

### **IV. Conclusion**

12. Based on the detailed replies concerning the two proposed follow-up actions, i.e. the possible creation of a task force on e-learning, and the collection of good practices on integrating administrative, survey and census data on education, the secretariat asked Australia to consider leading the work on either of the two proposals. If Australia were ready to lead the work, terms of reference should be prepared for the next CES Bureau meeting in November 2012.