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Organization of the in-depth reviews by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians**Organization of the in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians 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, identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues.

The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians discussed the organization of in-depth reviews at its meeting in February 2012. The Bureau approved the current note as a recommendation for organizing the in-depth reviews and for preparing papers that provide the basis for discussion. The note includes a short explanation about the aim and procedure of the reviews and a template for the in-depth review papers, presented in the Annex. The paper is presented to the Conference for information.

I. Purpose of the reviews

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews regularly selected statistical areas in depth to improve coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, 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 a coordinating nature. The review is based on a paper prepared by an invited country/organization. The aim of the discussion at the CES Bureau meeting is to decide on follow-up actions at international level to address the issues identified by the review.

2. The in-depth reviews are important tools for carrying out two key mandates of the CES and its Bureau, namely:

- (a) To promote close coordination of the statistical activities of international organizations.
- (b) To respond to any emerging need for international statistical cooperation.

II. Some history

3. In the past, all statistical areas were reviewed over a two-year cycle (e.g. one year economic statistics, the second year social statistics). The review papers were prepared by so-called Rapporteurs – international organizations that were assigned a responsibility for certain areas. Major contributors were Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNECE. The wide coverage and high frequency resulted in a heavy workload for the organizations concerned, a rather superficial discussion of individual statistical areas and insufficient attention to the country perspective.

4. Therefore, the process of in-depth reviews was substantially changed in 2005. Instead of covering all statistical areas, the Bureau decided to focus on 4-5 of the most topical areas each year. It was also decided to involve countries and Steering Groups as much as possible in the preparation of the in-depth review papers. It was considered important that the reports present the perspective of both the international organizations and countries.

5. Furthermore, in October 2008, the Bureau decided that it would be useful to discuss selected in-depth review topics at the CES plenary session prior to the discussion at the Bureau meetings. This would allow all CES members to contribute their input.

III. Selecting topics for the reviews

6. The Bureau selects the topics to be reviewed based on a proposal by the secretariat. The Bureau has decided that about 4-5 topics should be reviewed each year.

7. The criteria for selecting areas to be reviewed, as agreed in 2005, are the following:

- (a) There are significant developments in the area.
- (b) There are significant coordination issues.
- (c) There is a lack of activities at the international level.

8. The topics for the in-depth reviews are selected from the 56 statistical areas listed in the Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA) classification of statistical

activities. The topics may be either single topics, or ad hoc groupings from among the 56 statistical areas in the classification. The reviews should also be coordinated with the programme reviews by the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC), to avoid duplication. For this purpose, the UN Statistical Division informs each year the October meeting of the Bureau about the provisional agenda of the next UNSC session.

9. Furthermore, from among the selected areas, the Bureau will choose one topic each year to be discussed at the CES plenary session prior to the review at the Bureau meeting.

IV. Papers providing basis for the in-depth reviews

10. The CES Bureau invites a specific country or organization to prepare a paper to provide the main basis for the in-depth review. The paper can also be written jointly by several countries/organizations. Other members of the Bureau and international organizations active in the area under review are invited to contribute short notes to the discussion.

11. The papers may make use of the DISA to obtain an overview of statistical activities carried out by different international organizations in the selected area. The DISA is available at: www.unece.unog.ch/disa

12. The paper should be a maximum of 10-12 pages. A recommended structure for the paper is given in the Annex.

IV. The review process

13. The process of an in-depth review can be briefly described as follows:

	What	Who	When
1	The Bureau selects the topic to be reviewed in depth and asks a country/international organization to prepare the main paper providing basis for the review	CES Bureau	At February or October meeting of the Bureau
2	The Bureau chooses one of the selected in-depth review topics to be discussed at the CES plenary session in order to obtain input from all CES members.	CES Bureau	At February or October meeting of the Bureau
3	Preparation of the paper that will be discussed at the CES plenary session. The deadline is 15 March to allow for translation into French and Russian.	Author (country/organization)	By 15 March
4	Discussion at the CES plenary session in June. The CES members may also be invited to provide written comments on the in-depth review paper after the CES plenary session.	CES	CES plenary session in June
5	Updating the paper to take into account comments received during the CES plenary session and through written consultation.	Author (country/organization)	August-September
5	Preparation of the in-depth review paper. The authors are encouraged to consult with the international organizations whose activities are listed in the paper. In case the paper describes	Author (country/organization)	To be ready 1 month before the CES Bureau meeting where it will be discussed

	country experiences (depending on the topic), the authors are encouraged to contact a few countries with varying experience in the area to include a description of their practices and issues/challenges. The international organization that has the main responsibility for the area will be invited to participate in the Bureau meeting.	Secretariat	
6	The paper is distributed to the CES Bureau. The Bureau members and relevant international organizations are invited to contribute short notes to provide additional input to the discussion.	Secretariat CES Bureau	3-4 weeks before the Bureau meeting
7	In-depth review discussion at the CES Bureau meeting (in February or October). The discussion will focus on how to solve the identified problems and decide on concrete follow-up actions.	CES Bureau	At February or October meeting of the Bureau
8	The next CES plenary session (in June) will endorse the outcome of the review and its follow-up actions. The secretariat will prepare a short paper informing about the review process and the comments and decision by the Bureau. If necessary, the author may update the in-depth review paper to reflect the discussion.	CES Secretariat Author (country/ organization)	CES plenary session in June
9	The in-depth review paper and the documents related to the outcome and follow-up of the review will be made available on a dedicated web-page to promote this useful coordination mechanism and to give recognition to countries and organizations who have prepared high quality papers as a basis for the reviews.	Secretariat	As soon as papers are available

14. For the statistical areas that are selected for the in-depth review but not discussed at the CES plenary session the steps 3-5 will be skipped.

V. Action by the CES Bureau

15. The CES Bureau discussed the paper at its 7-8 February 2012 meeting. The Bureau emphasised the important role of the in-depth reviews and the need to make the reviews and their outcomes more visible. The information about previous in-depth reviews and their outcome is available at the UNECE Statistical Division website: <http://www.unece.org/statshome/in-depth-reviews.html>.

16. The Bureau approved the paper on organization of the in-depth reviews, including the template for in-depth review papers, as provided in Annex.

ANNEX

Template for the papers providing basis for the in-depth reviews by the CES Bureau¹

In-depth review of [statistical area]

Prepared by [country/organization]

I. Executive summary

1. About 1 page summarizing the main findings.

II. Introduction

2. The introduction should include the aim of the review. The following text can be used:

“The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The aim of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region, 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 a coordinating nature. The current paper provides the basis for the review by summarising the international statistical activities in the selected area, identifying issues and problems, and making recommendations on possible follow-up actions.

The CES Bureau selected [topic] for an in-depth review at its [...] meeting. [Country/organization] was requested to prepare the paper providing the main basis for the review.”

III. Scope/definition of the statistical area covered

3. Define the scope/coverage of the statistical area under review. This is especially important when the topic reviewed is a combination of different statistical areas from the DISA classification.

IV. Overview of international statistical activities in the area

[International organization 1]

[International organization 2]

Etc.

¹ The template should be viewed as a guideline. The structure of the paper may be adjusted depending on the nature of the topic under review.

4. The section provides a brief overview of the past and ongoing activities of each international organization involved in the selected statistical area, making clear the specialisation and value added of each organization. The overview should indicate the main outcomes of work (standards, classifications, handbooks, manuals, recommendations, etc.). Other leading activities outside official statistics that have an impact on the statistical work can also be covered. The main focus of the in-depth review is on the UNECE region but key developments and actors from other regions may be covered.

V. [Country practices] - optional

[Country 1]

[Country 2]

Etc.

5. The section provides an overview of the work of selected countries in the statistical area under review. The authors of the paper may ask a few countries who have experience in the selected area to present their practices, problems and issues, etc. It is desirable to include countries with differing practices.

VI. [Impact of crises on the statistical area] - optional

6. The Bureau has suggested that a section on impact of (financial) crisis should be introduced in future in-depth review papers. The section should cover how the crisis has affected the work of statistical offices/international organizations in the area, for example adjustments related to data production and dissemination, data holdings, methodologies, communication strategies, statistical programs, etc.

VII. Issues and challenges

[Issue 1]

[Issue 2]

Etc.

7. This section provides the most important information for the review. Main issues and problems in the area should be described, in particular in international statistical work. The issues should be considered from a strategic and future-oriented viewpoint. The paper may make a distinction between conceptual issues, measurement issues, managerial issues, etc.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

8. Based on the conclusions from the overview of international work undertaken in the area and the related issues and challenges, the paper should finish with concrete recommendations and proposals to the Bureau on how to solve the identified problems. The proposals can relate to e.g. setting up a Task Force to develop or update guidelines/recommendations, making an inventory of international activities in the area, improve sharing of information in the area (creating a knowledge-base, wiki), etc. The Bureau will consider the recommendations and decide on possible follow-up actions during the in-depth review discussion.