

**CES TASK FORCE ON EMERGING ISSUES IN SOCIAL STATISTICS
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Note prepared by Statistics Canada

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 2005, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) approved the creation of a Steering Group on Emerging Issues in Social Statistics (SGSS). Initial members included Canada (chair), Australia, United States, Italy, UNECE and EUROSTAT. Its mandate is to identify and develop concrete proposals to examine emerging issues in social statistics, including measurement concepts, common questions/modules and modalities to achieve them (including prototyping and/or testing strategies).

2. Two task forces were identified as initial forays: a new Task Force chaired by Canada on Volunteer Work and an existing Task Force chaired by Italy on Families and Households. Their work to date is summarized below. Both Task Forces are expected to finalize their work in the first half of 2009.

3. The SGSS in the last year had to renew its membership after several key members left upon retirement or transfer. At the same time, the SGSS started discussing possible topics that could be considered for future work from 2010. In fall 2009, the SGSS will present to the CES Bureau the final reports of the Task Forces on volunteer work and on families and households as well as a proposal for future work.

II. TASK FORCE ON VOLUNTEER WORK

4. The objective of this Task Force as approved by the CES Bureau in 2006 is to use the concept of volunteering as an experiment to demonstrate the practical and theoretical challenges in achieving comparable measurements of social research across countries. To this end, two levels of outputs were defined: one directly related to international standards specific to defining and measuring volunteering; the second a broader perspective on best practices for promoting and achieving international harmonization of social research.

5. John Hopkins University has been the central participant, working closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop a module on volunteer work for labour force and other household surveys. Canada has actively participated in this work as well, conducting focus group testing of a module for their LFS.

6. This past December 2008, the ILO adopted the guidelines developed with John Hopkins University entitled *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* for labor force

and other household surveys.

7. In light of the overlapping work John Hopkins is conducting with the ILO, and as discussed at previous CES Bureau meetings, the Task Force will wind up its activities this coming year with a report to the CES at the fall 2009 meeting.

III. TASK FORCE ON FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

8. The objectives of this Task Force as approved by the CES Bureau in 2006 included the definition of the concepts related to policy concerns including new forms of families and households; development of an analytical framework under which different forms of households and families can be measured; and assessment of the feasibility of implementing the concept for administrative data or survey use in the UNECE region.

9. An active group already collaborating with UNECE, their work fed directly into the CES Recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. They are now focusing on developing common sets of questions/modules to be used in household surveys to measure different forms of household and family arrangements such as same-sex couples, living apart together (LAT) couples, reconstituted families, commuters between households and persons living apart but within a network.

10. The Task Force has produced issues papers for each of the above emerging forms of household and family arrangements, covering definitional and measurement issues, practical experiences from selected countries, and a proposal on a common module/set of questions to be tested. The Task Force agreed that the assessment of the modules/sets of questions to be completed by December 2008 would be based mainly on the analysis of experiences from past surveys, including national surveys and international survey programmes such as the Generations and Gender Programme, the Population Policy Acceptance Survey (PPAS), or EU-SILC.

11. The report of this Task Force will be part of that of the SGSS presented to the CES Bureau in fall 2009.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF UNSD EXPERT GROUP ON EMERGING ISSUES IN SOCIAL STATISTICS

12. The UNSD in 2008 considered creating a global task force on emerging issues in social statistics. To discuss what form this could take, an Expert Group Meeting on the Scope and Content of Social Statistics was held in New York last September 2008. At the meeting, UNSD presented the advantages of a well-developed, coherent, and homogenous framework for social statistics and suggested that a City Group or Expert Group could oversee such a task force. However, such a framework does not currently exist, and it is unlikely to be forthcoming in the foreseeable future.

13. The Expert Group identified a number of potential gaps as well as best practices. It recommended that, as a first step, the UNSD facilitate an inventory of currently existing international methodological standards and guidelines in each area of social statistics; the availability of social statistics at the global level, including measures of quality; and ongoing statistical and methodological activities in social statistics at the international, regional, sub-regional, and national levels.

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