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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region
Outcomes of the recent in-depth reviews carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians**

Guidelines on the in-depth reviews of selected statistical areas by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

Prepared 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 present document is a revised version of the 2012 guidelines. In October 2022 the Bureau reviewed and approved the revised guidelines for the preparation of in-depth reviews, including the template for papers provided in the Annex.



I. Purpose of the reviews

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) regularly reviews selected statistical areas in depth to improve the 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 the 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.

3. The outcomes of completed in-depth reviews are sent for comments through an electronic consultation to all the CES member countries and submitted to the next CES plenary session for endorsement. Follow-up actions to address identified issues are decided by the Conference and its Bureau, and often lead to new work by teams of specialists, such as developing or updating guidelines/recommendations, making an inventory of international activities in the area, or improving sharing of information in the area.

II. Selection of topics

4. Each year, the Bureau reviews in-depth four topics. The topics should be of interest to the Heads of offices and concern emerging issues or an established area where new developments, gaps or coordination are needed.

5. In January, a list of possible topics is consulted with all CES members, who indicate their interest and express willingness to contribute to those topics. Countries will also be encouraged to propose additional topics.

6. In February, the CES Bureau selects four topics to be reviewed in depth (two for October same year and two for February of next year) and decides if any topic requires a pre-review discussion in a seminar format at the CES plenary session. After completing the reviews, the Bureau chooses one or two topics each year for a post-review discussion at the next CES plenary session.

III. Papers providing the basis for the in-depth reviews

7. The CES Bureau invites a 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.

8. 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

9. The process of an in-depth review can be briefly described as presented in table 1 below.

Table 1.
In-depth review process for a topic selected in year T.

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>CES Bureau</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>All CES members</i>
January year T	Secretariat compiles a list of topics in consultation with the Bureau and sends to all CES members for electronic consultation.		x		
	All CES members express their interest in proposed topics and contributing to an in-depth review or CES session. CES members can propose additional topics.				x
February year T	Secretariat submits to the CES Bureau the summary of electronic consultation.		x		
	CES Bureau selects four topics for in-depth review, designates the author countries or organizations and decides if the topic requires a pre-review discussion at the CES seminar.	x			
March year T	Secretariat informs the designated countries about the process, template and deadlines.		x		
	Authors start the work			x	
June year T	All CES members take note of the planned in-depth reviews and inform the Secretariat if they want to contribute.				x
	Optional: Pre-review seminar discussion at CES if decided in February.				
Sep year T	Authors finish the work and submit the paper to the Bureau.			x	
Oct year T	CES Bureau conducts the in-depth reviews.	x			
February year T+1	CES Bureau decides if the topic will be discussed at the CES in June (post-review discussion).	x			

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>CES Bureau</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>All CES members</i>
Mar year T+1	Authors update the paper if necessary.			x	
April year T+1	Secretariat sends the paper for electronic consultation.		x		
April-May year T+1	All CES members review the outcomes of the in-depth reviews and send comments through the electronic consultation.				x
June year T+1	All CES members endorse the outcomes during the plenary session. Optional: Discuss the topic at the CES if selected.				x

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 the 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/volunteered 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.

IV. Overview of international statistical activities in the area

[International organization 1]

[International organization 2]

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 specialization 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]

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

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.

the selected area to present their practices, problems and issues, etc. It is desirable to include countries with differing practices.

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

6. The section can cover how recent developments, such as shocks, crises or new demands, have 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 programmes, etc.

VII. Issues and challenges

[Issue 1]

[Issue 2]

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. The in-depth review should pay particular attention to analysing user needs for statistics and synergies with related activities outside the statistical community.

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. This section should prioritise the issues and propose actions taking into account the limited resources of statistical offices. 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, improving 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.
