CALL FOR PAPERS

I.   BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF MEETING

1.   The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia will jointly hold an Expert meeting on statistics on children from 4 to 6 March 2024 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The expert meeting includes the annual TransMonEE network meeting on 6 March 2024. TransMonEE is a three-decade-old partnership among national statistics offices (NSOs) to strengthen the coverage, quality, disaggregation, accessibility and use of data on children in Europe and Central Asia.

2.   At its October 2022 meeting, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians decided to hold an expert meeting for focal points on statistics on children in national statistical offices, other relevant national agencies, and international organizations. The meeting will provide a platform to support countries in the implementation of the Guidance on Statistics on Children and advance methodological work on the priority areas identified, building on the work of the UNICEF-supported TransMonEE network as well as the network of experts recently convened by OECD.

3.   The meeting programme is developed by the programme committee that includes representatives from Canada, Ireland, Italy, the United Kingdom, OECD, UNICEF and UNECE.

4.   The invitation is addressed to all national statistical offices participating in the work of the Conference of European Statisticians and to national and international agencies collecting data or compiling statistics on children. Representatives of academia, civil society, and other individuals may also register and will be able to participate subject to available capacity.

II.   INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS AND IMPORTANT DEADLINES

5.   Papers should aim to be forward-looking with the goal of providing information that is useful for others: e.g. highlighting findings or experiences that could offer valuable lessons learned; and/or showing how these experiences will inform future approaches.

6.   The organizing committee will review all submissions and, if necessary, select the papers to be presented at the meeting.

7.   Instructions and deadlines for preparing presentation slides will be sent by email to the selected presenters.

8. Please take note of the following deadlines:

1 December 2023	Please send an e-mail to social.stats@un.org: • to express your intention to contribute a paper (indicate tentative title and agenda item); and • to submit a short abstract (100–200 words) in English or Russian. A message shall be sent to all submitting authors to confirm that their abstract has been received.
1 February 2024	Submit the full final version of your **paper** in Word to social.stats@un.org. Please use this template and follow the instructions in it.
9 February 2024	All participants attending the meeting must register online at the following link: https://indico.un.org/e/UNECEChildrenMeeting2024

9.   The meeting will be held with simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Russian. Presentations may be made in any of these three languages.

10.   Papers, presentations, and logistical information will be made available on the meeting webpage.

III.   SESSION THEMES

11.   The session themes for the three meeting days (4–6 March) pertain to the broader issues of improving the production and use of data and statistics on children and to the focus topics of the Guidance on Statistics on Children — children in alternative care, children with disabilities, and violence against children.

Improving the production and use of data and statistics on children

12.   It is recommended to include children in regular data collection and most countries regularly produce reports or statistical products focused on children. Yet there are indications that the gap between demand and availability of data on children has widened in recent years. This session calls for contributions describing activities and plans to improve the availability, comparability and use of data on children.

13.   Contributions could pertain to:

   a.   data collection using innovative approaches and sources

   b.   increasing the use of administrative data and linked data

   c.   dissemination through statistical and analytical products and interactive web platforms

   d.   national plans for indicators on children

14.   It would be desirable to highlight how national statistical offices engage in these activities with other data producers, research organizations, and policy stakeholders.

Children in alternative care and use of administrative and linked data

15.   Statistics on children in alternative care are often missing or insufficient despite reporting duties of countries to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CCRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CCRPD), and the international commitments and policy initiatives to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families and to deinstitutionalise children in institutional care and support their transition to community and family-based alternative care . While many countries do gather and publish data on these children, international standards, definitions, and protocols to support the collection of such data are lacking. As a result, the availability and quality of data as well as its comparability are problematic.

16.   Some NSOs have highlighted barriers to access, validate and use the data generated by different administrative data systems across alternative care services in the health, education and social sectors. The use of administrative data to fill information gaps on children in alternative care is also relatively new. Such data offer a potential for an efficient production of statistics for monitoring and evaluating policy and programmes and for research. They can further represent a valuable complement to survey-based data sources improving indicators, e.g., on education and health outcomes of children in alternative care. Some NSOs reported data collection on children in residential care through surveys or survey modules covering institutional populations; while others gather data on children in family-based care through household surveys or census.

17.   The exchange of experiences and best practices among countries and international initiatives can encourage harmonization of concepts and methods, and facilitate collaboration around the aspects of data use that are unique to this group of children, including NSO's role in leading (a) an intersectoral effort to map, plan, implement and harmonise systematic data collection on children in alternative care, including variables for use in disaggregation, (b) the triangulation of data from different sources, such as registries, surveys or censuses to establish a

holistic view of the situation of children in alternative care, (c) a review of ethical issues such as consent, privacy and confidentiality and legal frameworks for data sharing, data use, and linkages, and (d) an evaluation of data systems and statistics on children in alternative care to address incomplete coverage of the target population in administrative data systems or survey instruments and/or strengthening of respective management information systems.

Violence against children and the implementation of the International Classification of Violence against Children

18.   While there has been progress in the measurement of violence against children (VAC), capturing data on this remains challenging in most countries. NSOs reported challenges related to the application of different definitions across different data sources, mandates to collect data, fragmentation of data collection, low quality of administrative data, limited capacity and lack of resources.

19.   The development of the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC) responds to a fundamental need for internationally agreed concepts, definitions and principles to ensure a standardised and consistent approach to classify statistical data on violence against children. The aim of ICVAC is to provide a basis for statistics that are comparable between and within countries and support the development of national classifications. The ICVAC underwent a comprehensive review by more than 200 experts from international organizations, national statistical offices, government entities and academia and was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission earlier in 2023. A dedicated session during a meeting of experts would be an important first step in building awareness among countries of ICVAC and supporting its implementation. In addition to covering ICVAC, this session will involve the exchange of experiences and best practices among countries and international initiatives around (a) good practices in coordination of efforts to build a comprehensive data collection and monitoring system on VAC; (b) positive developments in the clarity of mandate and resources of NSOs (and/or line ministries) responsible for producing data on VAC; (c) improvement of availability and disaggregation of data on VAC-related SDG indicators.

Improvement of coherence and comparability of data on children with disabilities

20.   While there has been a conceptual paradigm shift from the medical approach of defining disability to a biopsychosocial model, data collection tools in most countries have not evolved to align with this change, impeding monitoring that would align with the implementation of the UNCRPD. While a number of countries have started applying the biopsychosocial model in surveys— defining disability in terms of functional or activity limitations in the context of environmental barriers—there still exists much variability.

21.   The UNICEF-Washington Group Child Functioning Module (CFM) has been internationally developed, tested and validated, and is currently used in several countries to measure disability among children in a way that aligns with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The module focuses on difficulties in functioning, defined in terms of basic functions that are not influenced by culture or context, ensuring cross-national comparability in the data. An important finding of the Guidance is that there is limited use of this

module among countries participating in the CES. Further work is necessary to investigate the existing barriers to the implementation of the CFM in the region and to consider whether adaptations of the module to increase use are methodologically sound. The work currently undertaken by Eurostat to test elements of the WG question set in the European Health Interview Survey could provide insight into the implementation of the module in broader-based household surveys. The exchange of country experiences in data collection on children with disabilities, including those using the CFM, would be an important step towards broader adaptation of this validated tool.

22.   The exchange of experiences and best practices among countries and international initiatives can encourage harmonisation and facilitate collaboration around the aspects of data on children with disabilities, including (a) country-level work towards the harmonisation of basic information on persons with disabilities in administrative data; (b) NSO's role in leading an intersectoral effort to map, plan and implement systematic data collection on children with disabilities; (c) adoption of the UNICEF/ Washington Group Child Functioning Module and its combined use with administrative data to understand the situation of children with disabilities better.

IV.   CONTACT INFORMATION

Programme
  UNECE
  Andres Vikat
  Chief, Social and Demographic Statistics section
  Statistical Division, UNECE
  andres.vikat@un.org

  UNICEF
  Siraj Mahmudlu
  Child Rights Monitoring Manager
  Regional Office for Europe & Central Asia
  smahmudlu@unicef.org

Organization
  UNECE
  Yana Trofimova
  Programme Management Assistant
  Social and Demographic Statistics
  Statistical Division, UNECE
  social.stats@un.org