

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

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Cardiff, UK, 9-10 October 2023

Item III (i) of the Provisional
Agenda

STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2024

Prepared by the Secretariat

The document presents the draft UNECE statistical programme for 2024. The Bureau approved the programme.

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose of this document

1. This document presents the activities that the Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will carry out in 2024. The document is in line with the Programme of Work for 2024¹, which is the main official document in the United Nations’ planning and budgeting system providing the basis for allocating the budget and planning the necessary United Nations support services for the substantive work programmes.

2. While the official work programme presents the work at an aggregated level, the current document describes the work in more detail, explaining:

- The main activities in 2024
- Why the activities are needed, and the issues they address
- The expected results and impact of these activities.

B. Objective and strategy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme

3. According to the UN proposed programme budget for 2024¹ the objective of the UNECE Statistical Programme is “to advance official statistics at the national and international levels for evidence-based policymaking and assessing progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to ensure the coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region under the Conference of European Statisticians (CES).”

4. UNECE strives to achieve this objective through four interconnected streams of work carried out in close cooperation with UNECE member States (see Figure 1): (1) streamlining international statistical work in the UNECE region; (2) methodological work to develop and promote guidelines and recommendations to enhance the quality of statistics; (3) capacity development, in particular to measure progress towards SDGs; and (4) the UNECE statistical database.

Figure 1.

Work streams of the Statistical Division of UNECE



¹ A/78/6 (Sect.20)

5. The work of the Statistical Division is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians to ensure that it focuses on the priorities of member countries. It is carried out in close cooperation with other international organizations active in statistics, such as the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Free-Trade Association (EFTA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The work also responds to the guidance provided by the UNECE and its Executive Committee (EXCOM), and global initiatives of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC).
6. UNECE EXCOM considered the work of CES in January 2023 and supported the work of the Conference and the planned activities for 2023 and beyond.
7. EXCOM noted the high practical relevance of the work undertaken by the Conference of European Statisticians, which have allowed official statistics to modernize, address emerging challenges and strengthen evidence-based policy making. Modern statistics not only help to drive domestic innovation around big data and automation, but are essential to a well informed and democratic society. The importance of an impartial and objective approach to the work of the Conference was emphasized.
8. Ensuring coordination with other regional actors, namely the OECD and Eurostat, was commended. EXCOM recognized the important role of the Conference in the methodological work on official statistics that are also implemented in other regions and at the global level. The joint session held by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management for the ECE region and the increasing cooperation in the area of geospatial information were welcome.
9. EXCOM noted with appreciation the work in many areas, including assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, systems of national accounting, measuring globalization, digitization, well-being, informal economy, forms of employment, international migration, poverty and inequality, modernization of official statistics, and communication. The capacity building work was highlighted, nothing in particular the support in response to COVID-19 crisis, population censuses, modernization of official statistics, and machine learning.
10. UNECE supports the streamlining of international statistical work in the region by providing the secretariat for CES.
11. Guided by the priorities and needs of the member States expressed through CES, UNECE carries out methodological work by establishing and servicing teams of national experts to develop international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices.
12. Upon the request of member States, UNECE assesses gaps in national statistical systems of the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and undertakes capacity development activities to support the implementation of international guidelines and standards, with a particular focus on the materials developed under CES.
13. Finally, UNECE operates an online statistical database focusing on areas of high political importance, including SDGs, offering insights into policy issues and measurement challenges. Gaps or areas of limited harmonization in the database enable identification of priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and help UNECE in targeting support for the development of statistical systems in countries.
14. All CES work is guided by the United Nations *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, a standard developed by CES in 1992 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014². UNECE will continue to promote the Fundamental Principles which

² A/RES/68/261

provide a basis for impartial, high-quality statistics, using the wide range of materials that were prepared on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Principles in 2022.

15. UNECE statistical work is strongly related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a follow-up and review of the achievement of the goals and targets “based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”.³

16. UNECE works on statistics for SDGs in three main ways. First, it supports national statistical offices in their role as coordinators and providers of statistics for SDGs. Second, it undertakes methodological and national statistical capacity development work in demographic, social, economic and environment statistics, supporting the production of statistics and indicators for measuring progress towards SDGs in specific subject areas. The collection and dissemination of data on SDG indicators constitute the third component of this work. In 2023, UNECE will continue to maintain a regional knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs, including a platform providing data on SDGs for the UNECE countries.

C. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Division and Conference of European Statisticians in the international statistical community

17. UNECE provides the secretariat for CES, which is the highest-level intergovernmental statistical body of the UNECE region and a platform for the regional coordination of statistical work.

18. CES comprises the Heads of national statistical offices of 56 UNECE member States, OECD member countries and some other countries outside the region (for example, Brazil and Mongolia). According to the *Rules governing the work of CES*, any United Nations member State which regularly participates in CES activities can become a member. The Heads of statistical services of international agencies participate actively in the CES work.

19. CES and its Bureau pay particular attention to avoiding duplication of work with other international organizations active in the region, and to making efficient use of available resources. CES undertakes work on emerging topics to support the development of statistics and brings together experts to develop products, such as statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of good practice, which often have a global impact. Through CES, countries share resources for statistical development by exchanging expertise and using an international pool of experts.

20. The UNECE statistical work is driven by the priorities and needs of CES member countries, as well as by the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

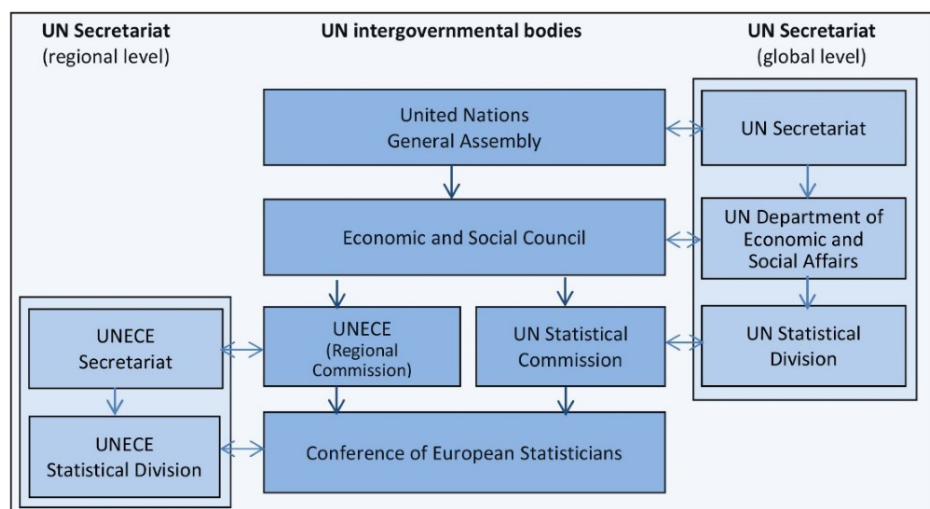
21. In addition, general guidance is given by UNECE EXCOM, the UN Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

22. A diagrammatic representation of the UNECE Statistical Division and CES within the United Nations institutional structure is shown in Figure 2.

³ See: *A/RES/70/1*, para. 74

Figure 2

Conference of European Statisticians and the UNECE Statistical Division in the United Nations intergovernmental structure



23. UNECE cooperates closely with other international and supranational organizations active in the region, such as OECD, Eurostat, EFTA, CIS-Stat, ILO, IMF, the World Bank, as well as other United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, related organizations or other United Nations bodies wherever relevant. The cooperation takes the form of joint meetings, joint capacity development projects or activities, partnership in developing recommendations and guidelines, and contribution to the work of the CES task forces and task teams. The regional cooperation includes co-chairing the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics in Europe and Central Asia, which comprises UN and non-UN bodies active in statistics at the regional level, as well as focal points on data and statistics from UN country teams.

24. Many activities are undertaken jointly with Eurostat and OECD allowing efficient use of resources and ensuring that all countries of the region benefit from the ongoing international statistical work in emerging areas. The activities are thoroughly discussed to avoid duplication of effort and, in case of joint work, to have a clear division of labour building on the strengths and different membership of the participating organizations.

25. The UNECE region is diverse, comprising both developed and developing statistical systems. This diversity provides a good basis to deal with new and emerging issues while ensuring that the results of the work are applicable in countries with different levels of statistical development. The exchange of knowledge, practices, new developments and challenges provided by CES is enriching to all participants. There are several examples of issues that have first been raised in the countries with developing statistical systems which have turned out to also be of high interest to countries with more advanced systems, and which have resulted in tools that are useful for all countries in the region and beyond (e.g. the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Generic Law of Official Statistics).

II. Annual programme of work

26. In 2024, UNECE statistical work will focus on the following priorities: statistics for SDGs; economy and globalization; well-being; population and migration, gender, children, poverty and inequalities; environment, climate change, hazardous events and disasters, circular economy; modernization and innovation of official statistics, and strategic and managerial issues. Capacity development will focus on areas highlighted by assessments of statistical systems.

A. Streamlining international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

27. Coordination of international statistical work in the region is a key task for CES to avoid duplication of work, find synergies, use resources efficiently and reduce the burden on national statistical offices. CES and its Bureau regularly discuss international statistical work in the region, carry out in-depth reviews and organize seminars to explore foundational issues and emerging topics in official statistics. CES endorses the main outputs, guidelines and recommendations prepared under its work programme.

28. At its annual plenary session, CES discusses selected emerging topics of high interest to the Heads of NSOs. The topics are selected by the CES Bureau based on interest expressed by countries and taking into account the latest developments and most urgent priorities.

29. The CES Bureau will steer the statistical work under the Conference and will meet twice in 2024 to review selected statistical areas in depth, including use cases for alternative population bases; linking data across domains and sources; timeliness and frequency of official statistics; and administrative microdata for climate, energy and environment statistics. Some of the in-depth reviews carried out earlier by the Bureau will lead to follow-up work in 2024:

- Following an in-depth review on social cohesion in February 2023, a task team was established to collect information on how the concept of social cohesion is measured in different countries and to identify good practices. The task team is expected to present its report in October 2025.
- Following the in-depth review of hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources in February 2023, a Task Force will work on identifying the types of hard-to-reach groups in different countries, and collect best practices in using information on hard-to-reach populations from administrative sources (subject to CES Bureau's approval in October 2023).
- Following an in-depth review of the measurement of well-being in February 2023, the CES Bureau decided to establish a Task Force to develop guidelines on the measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing well-being indicators (subject to CES Bureau's approval in October 2023). The Task Force is expected to finalise its report in 2025.
- Following an in-depth review of the data ethics in October 2022, a CES seminar "Data ethics – a key enabler of social acceptability" was organised in June 2023. The Bureau will decide on the further steps in October 2023 meeting, taking into account the work currently undertaken under the HLG-MOS, and report back to the CES plenary session in 2024.
- Following the in-depth review on collaboration with private sector data providers, a CES seminar in 2022 CES and the adoption of a CES *Position statement on the access to data held by the private sector for purposes of official statistics*, a Task Team is collecting best practices in collaboration with private data providers, building on the outcomes of a survey carried out among countries in 2022.
- Following the in-depth review of subjective poverty measures in October 2021, a Task Force is developing a guide on measuring subjective poverty, including a set of subjective poverty indicators that could be used for international comparison. The guide is planned to be presented to CES for endorsement in 2024.
- Following the in-depth review of measuring circular economy in February 2020, a Task Force is drafting practical guidelines for measuring circular economy, including clarification of key terms and definitions, and identification of key statistics, indicators and data sources. The CES approved Part A of the Guidelines in June 2023, and the work will continue to develop Part B, including guidance on data sources and on using indicators, the required institutional collaboration, and more case examples.

B. Methodological work on statistical standards, guidelines and recommendations

30. The aim of the methodological work is to develop and promote international standards, guidelines and recommendations to respond to countries' demands to improve the quality and comparability of official statistics and efficiency of statistical production. The areas of methodological work are presented in summary form on Figure 3.

31. The methodological work is conducted by teams of specialists set up by CES or its Bureau for a particular task with concrete terms of reference, membership, output, timeframe and a sunset clause. The Statistical Division of UNECE convenes, mobilizes and manages these groups, working with them to facilitate turning their knowledge and experience into international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices. UNECE acts as the secretariat for the teams and provides tools such as wikis (which allow common working spaces and discussion forums) and online events to connect experts and foster collaboration. Some teams of specialists use modern working methods such as sprints to deliver results in a short time frame. Most of the work is carried out using online forms of collaboration. At the same time, periodic face-to-face expert meetings allow for more in depth discussion, forming of professional networks and maintaining team spirit and motivation, which the online collaboration can build upon.

32. To ensure high quality and relevance, the standards, recommendations and guidelines developed by the CES teams of specialists are consulted among all CES members (close to 70 countries from the UNECE region and beyond) before endorsement by the Conference.

Figure 3.

Methodological work by the UNECE Statistical Division



33. The following three task forces plan to submit their recommendations for endorsement to the CES plenary session in 2024: subjective poverty measures; role of NSOs in achieving climate objectives; and measuring hazardous events and disasters.

1. Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

34. The statistical work of UNECE encompasses all SDGs, supporting national statistical offices to facilitate country-led reporting of statistics for SDGs. In 2024, work will continue to enhance the **UNECE regional platform for data on SDG indicators** launched in 2020. UNECE is also maintaining a *knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs* where more detailed information about its work in this area, as well as useful resources for experts, is available.

35. In 2021 the Conference endorsed a 2nd edition of its flagship publication, the *CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs* that is widely used by countries and international organizations. In 2024 UNECE will continue work on supporting countries in implementing the second edition of the Road Map. UNECE work in this area is steered and coordinated through the CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs that establishes priorities and identifies concrete actions and tools that can support countries in their work in this area. In 2024, the priority items include the development of a concept for training material on the role of NSOs for the SDGs intended primarily for new NSO staff, and work on SDG indicator availability assessments.

36. The Steering Group will promote the use of tools developed by its Task Teams. A Task Team on statistical capacity development has prepared a matrix as a self-assessment tool for statistical offices to identify their needs and priorities for capacity development. The matrix has gone through pilot testing in some countries and is expected to be endorsed by the Steering Group during its annual meeting in October 2023. Another Task Team has prepared materials to help countries with their automatic data transmission to the UNSD DataLab using SDMX. This second Task Team is also expected to present its concluding report during the 2023 annual meeting of the Steering Group.

37. A Task Team on **Communication of statistics for SDGs** will continue its work on preparing materials to improve effective communication of the role and provision of statistics on SDGs to various stakeholders. The current focus is to collect a best practice repository of materials through communication fortnights - bi-weekly Task Team meetings on specific topics related to SDG data communications.

38. In 2020, UNECE launched its **regional platform for data on SDG indicators**, which consists of a dashboard and database of selected SDG indicators in English and Russian, and a knowledge hub. In 2024, the dashboard and database will be further enhanced and their coverage of indicators expanded.

39. Since 2020, the Statistical Division is preparing an annual **report on progress with SDGs**. Using internationally available data and an advanced statistical methodology commonly used by all five United Nations regional commissions, the 2024 report will assess the UNECE region's progress towards the goals and targets. It will be prepared in cooperation with the agencies and country teams represented in the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia.

40. The Statistical Division also undertakes methodological work and national statistical capacity development on demographic, social, economic, and environment statistics to inform policy decisions related to SDGs. The thematic work is described below in the respective sections.

2. Economy, globalization and well-being

41. UNECE works with countries to develop and implement international standards and recommendations to improve the quality and comparability of economic statistics, which are a prerequisite for the compilation of many SDG indicators, including those with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the denominator. UNECE will also contribute to the Beyond GDP initiative. The main priority areas for 2024 include measuring economic growth, well-

being and sustainability; globalization; informal economy, statistical business registers; quality of employment and new forms of employment; and price statistics.

42. UNECE promotes the **implementation and update of the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA)** to enable the provision of high-quality data for economic analysis and policies. The meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts (organized jointly with Eurostat and OECD) will inform countries of the progress towards the 2025 SNA update, seek feedback and facilitate the testing and implementation of the new recommendations in the areas of measuring globalization, digitalization, well-being and sustainability, informal economy and communication. Issues related to the Beyond GDP initiative, measuring SDGs and post-Covid recovery will also be addressed. UNECE will continue to support the implementation of the SNA and consultation and testing of the SNA Update recommendations in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE) in cooperation with regional partners.

43. Better measures are needed to link economic development to broader framework of measuring well-being and sustainability. UNECE has published several guides to help countries construct internationally comparable statistics on [human capital](#), [unpaid household service work](#) and [education and training](#). These will become part of the updated SNA. In 2024, UNECE continues to facilitate the implementation of these Guides.

44. In 2021, UNECE launched an online inventory of **thematic and extended accounts** produced by countries. In 2024, UNECE will update the inventory and create a new user-friendly website that will facilitate the sharing of experience and best practice between countries, including on the production of the thematic and extended accounts included in the 2025 SNA Update.

45. In a globalized world, enterprises operate in complex value chains that span multiple countries making “national” accounting increasingly challenging. The **exchange of economic data** between countries for statistical purposes is, therefore, becoming a necessity, as identified in the *Guide to Measuring Global Production* (UNECE, 2015). In 2021, UNECE published the *Guide to Sharing Economic Data in Official Statistics*. In 2024, UNECE will continue to promote the implementation of the Guides, and contribute to the work of the IMF-led DGI-3 Task Team on data sharing agreements.

46. UNECE will also collaborate with other international expert groups dealing with the **impact of globalization on economic statistics**, such as the Integrated Global Accounts project of Eurostat, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics the UN Network of Economic Statisticians, and OECD expert groups.

47. Following an in-depth review of the **measurement of well-being**, the CES Bureau in 2023 established a Task Force to develop guidelines on the measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing well-being indicators. The guidelines will aim to synthesize existing frameworks into operational recommendations with a focus on core indicators of well-being where harmonisation and improved international comparability is feasible. The guidelines will also provide typology and definitions and give advice on data sources, compilation methods and communication. The Task Force is expected to finalise its report in 2025.

48. Over the last couple of years, price increases on goods and services have renewed the interest in the **consumer price index (CPI)** and the role of the CPI in measuring the impact of inflation on households’ standard of living. UNECE is a member of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (together with Eurostat, ILO, IMF, OECD and World Bank) that coordinates international work on price statistics. In cooperation with ILO, UNECE organises biennial meetings of the Expert Group on Consumer Price Indices. The next meeting of the group that will take place in 2025 will discuss, among other things, the use of data sources (including big data and administrative data), the development of resilient production systems and CPIs for measuring households’ standard of living.

49. UNECE supports the development of **statistical business registers** which are indispensable for efficient data collection and production of economic statistics. UNECE supports the implementation of the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* (UNECE, 2015) in national statistical offices. In cooperation with Eurostat and OECD, UNECE will

organise the biennial meeting of the Expert Group on Business Registers in 2024 to discuss modernisation of the business register, utilisation of administrative data and the challenges associated with the measurement of the digital economy and globalisation and multinational enterprises.

50. UNECE, jointly with Eurostat, ILO and OECD, contributes to the international work on **measuring quality of employment** responding to the demand for data on the qualitative aspects of employment beyond traditional labour force statistics. In 2024, UNECE will organise the biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Measuring Quality of Employment to discuss current and emerging issues. In addition, the Steering Group on Quality of Employment will consider updating the *Handbook on Measuring the Quality of Employment* (UNECE, 2015) to reflect revisions of ILO standards, country experiences and emerging issues. .

51. Over the previous decade new **forms of employment** have emerged, such as employment in the ‘gig’ economy, ‘platform’ work and ‘teleworking’. These developments have significant economic and social impacts and there has been growing interest from policy makers in statistics to describe the development of the labour market.. In response, the *Handbook on Forms of Employment* was developed and endorsed by CES in June 2022 to assist countries in producing relevant, coherent and internationally comparable statistics on forms of employment. In 2024, UNECE will follow up on topics of further work identified in the Handbook, which includes conceptual issues, measurement challenges, and sharing of country experiences.

3. Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality

52. There is an increasing policy demand for data on people's well-being, social environment and demographic change. The work in 2024 will focus on poverty and inequality, migration, gender, children, and population and housing censuses. Many challenges relate to the need to increase the use of administrative data and to measure hard-to-reach population groups. This area of work is of particular importance for monitoring progress towards SDGs since many indicators require population data in the denominator and should be disaggregated by sex, migratory status and other variables. A task force will be working in 2024 on identifying and measuring hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources. In February 2024, the CES Bureau will conduct an in-depth review of linking data across domains and sources.

53. UNECE supports countries in preparing for, conducting, processing and disseminating data from their **population and housing censuses**. Censuses represent the very foundation of statistical systems. They provide the baseline information used to plan public infrastructure and services, and to produce SDG indicators and many other statistics where population is the denominator. Censuses cover the entire population and allow the production of statistics for various small population groups whose measurement is essential to ensure that “no one is left behind” in working towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

54. The resolution of the Economic and Social Council 2020 *World Population and Housing Census Programme* provides a global mandate for this work. In 2022, thirteen task forces under the CES Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses embarked on a multi-year effort to develop the *CES Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses of the 2030 Round*. In 2024, they will analyze results of the comprehensive survey of national practices in censuses of the 2020 round and develop the text of the recommendations for the 2030 round. An expert meeting and capacity development workshop in October 2024 will provide an opportunity for the task forces to present their progress to the entire community of census experts, engaging them to tackle any challenges brought to light during the work. The results of the comprehensive survey will be compiled into a publication and online interactive tool to permit detailed analyses of how countries across the region conduct their censuses.

55. UNECE promotes exchange of experience and methodological work on **measuring poverty and inequality**. Measuring progress towards SDGs on the reduction of poverty (Goal 1) and inequality (Goal 10) requires comparable, multidimensional and coherent set of indicators. In 2024, UNECE will hold an expert meeting to advance the methodological work

on the additional needs on measuring poverty and inequality. The Task Force on subjective poverty measures will complete its work on a set of subjective poverty indicators that could be used for international comparison and providing related guidance to national statistical offices. A task team will be working in 2024 to collect information on how the concept of social cohesion is measured in different countries and to identify good practices. UNECE will continue to promote the use of its harmonized survey module for measuring poverty. The work will follow the available methodological guidance, including the recently developed documents – *Guide on Poverty Measurement* (UNECE, 2017), *Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation* (UNECE, 2020), and *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion* (UNECE, 2022).

56. UNECE aims to improve the availability, quality and international comparability of **migration statistics**. This responds to the strong demand for collecting and using data on migration, expressed, among others, in the first objective of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. Ten SDG indicators are directly related to migration and a further 24 need to be disaggregated by migratory status. The 2024 meeting of the Group of Experts on Migration Statistics will discuss use of administrative data and new data sources for measuring migration, results from the 2020 population census round on migration data, definitions of international migration and mobility, and measurement of emigration. To enhance the use and exchange of migration data, UNECE will continue to update and improve its *Clearing House on Migration Statistics*. To improve data availability and comparability, UNECE will continue promoting use of its harmonized survey module for measuring migration and remittances.

57. UNECE work on **gender statistics** aims to share knowledge and experience and to develop capacity in areas where data and indicators of gender equality are insufficient or lacking. Better gender statistics are needed for the monitoring of SDGs, particularly to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5) and for developing gender-responsive policies. In 2024, the UNECE Steering Group on Gender Statistics will develop a plan for methodological work on measuring gender stereotypes and gender discrimination, and collect information on emerging national practices of measuring technology-facilitated violence against women. UNECE will continue to promote the national application of its *Toolkit for training users of gender statistics*, *Guidance on communicating gender statistics* and *Guidance on measuring the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and men*.

58. In 2022, UNECE published guidance that provides recommendations for more harmonized definitions, methodologies and approaches **to statistics on children** across the countries participating in the CES. In 2024, UNECE, together with UNICEF, will for the first time convene an expert meeting for focal points on statistics on children in national statistical offices, other relevant national agencies, and international organizations. The purpose is to support countries in the implementation of *the Guidance on statistics on children* and identify priority areas for methodological work. The meeting is expected to address harmonization of concepts, as issues related to the use of surveys and administrative data, including legal and ethical frameworks specific to data on children.

4. Environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters

59. UNECE activities in this domain aim to improve statistics that are of high relevance to environmental policies and required to derive many SDG indicators. The main priorities in 2023 will include climate change-related statistics and indicators, environment statistics, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), statistics related to hazardous events and disasters (including the Covid-19 pandemic) and measuring circular economy.

60. Among the three pillars of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – data availability for the environmental pillar is the lowest. UN Environment estimates that for about 58 per cent of the environment-related SDG indicators there is insufficient data, making it difficult to assess progress and understand the environmental

challenges⁴. Providing data on environment-related SDGs (such as Goals 6, 14 and 15) is a challenge for all countries, especially those with less developed statistical systems. The Joint Task Force (JTF) of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and CES will continue to support the improvement of the production and quality of environment statistics in EECCA and SEE countries, in line with the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. The Guidelines are currently under review to align them with SDG indicators, the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and SEEA. This work will result in a revised set of indicators and statistics recommended for regular production in the region. The work contributes to the pan-European Shared Environmental Information System and is carried out in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, Eurostat and UNSD.

61. UNECE supports the use of the global System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) in the region, jointly with OECD. This includes building capacity in support of SEEA, providing a forum for exchange of knowledge and experience, assessing data availability and developing methods and sources for the necessary data. In 2024, the work will continue with a focus on using SEEA for producing statistics and indicators on disaster-risk and circular economy, identifying new techniques and data sources for compiling SEEA accounts (including Ecosystem Accounts), policy uses, communication strategies and coordination of work in the region. UNECE will also support building capacity for environment statistics and SEEA in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

62. As **climate change** is affecting all aspects of the economy and society, more and more data from national statistical offices are needed for climate-related policies and analyses. The UNECE annual Expert Forum for producers and users of climate change related statistics provides a platform for collaborating, sharing ideas and experience, discussing concepts and measurement issues, and identifying areas where practical guidance is needed. In 2023, a dedicated Task Force started to work on developing guidance on the role of NSOs in achieving national climate objectives – the reporting under the Paris Agreement, meeting information needs of national policymaking in the areas of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and informing the public about climate-related issues. In 2024, the guidance document is expected to be presented for endorsement to CES. The UNECE Steering Group will continue to collect good practices in climate change-related statistics through a wiki platform and an annual good practice sharing exercise *Climate Change-Related Statistics in Practice*, and support the implementation of the *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-related Statistics* proposing holistic and systemic approaches to the development of climate change-related statistics. The Group will also follow the implementation of the *set of core climate change-related indicators*, endorsed by CES in June 2020.

63. UNECE brings together statisticians and disaster risk experts, including from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), to develop official statistics for **hazardous events and disasters**. In 2021, UNECE Statistical Division in collaboration with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics (IAEG-DRS), organised the first global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics bringing together statisticians with disaster risk management experts, researchers and NGOs. The UNECE Statistical Division is contributing to these Fora that have now become annual aiming to improve official statistics for better managing and monitoring disaster risk and to take into account the data-related lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. In June 2023 CES endorsed the *Pilot set of core disaster-risk-related indicators* which will be further tested and refined by the Task Force on measuring hazardous events and disasters. The Task Force will furthermore develop practical implementation guidelines and contribute to activities of UNDRR to support the statistical operationalisation of the *UNDRR/ISC Sendai Hazard Definition and Classification Review Technical Report*.

64. The policy initiatives aiming to establish a **circular economy** are increasing in many countries and the European Union. In June 2023, CES endorsed the *Joint UNECE/OECD*

⁴ 'Measuring Progress: Environment and the SDGs (UNEP, 2021).

<https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/measuring-progress-environment-and-sdgs>

Guidelines for Measuring Circular Economy (Part A) which provide a conceptual foundation and a set of proposed indicators for measuring circular economy. In 2024, the Task Force on Measuring Circular Economy will continue with its work by drafting implementation guidelines, defining the key statistics and data sources (with a particular attention on SEEA and Framework for Development of Environmental Statistics) and describing the required institutional collaboration.

5. Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics

65. The first Fundamental Principle states that “official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data [...]. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens’ entitlement to public information.” To be able to honour this commitment, official statistics need a strong legal and institutional basis. As the landscape of information producers is rapidly changing, the legislative and institutional infrastructure must support the development of new business models, engagement in partnerships and use of new data sources and technologies to allow modernization of official statistics. UNECE activities in this domain aim to strengthen the responsiveness, accountability and transparency of statistical institutions to ensure access to high quality information, as enshrined in SDGs (Goal 16).

66. In 2024, UNECE will continue to provide a platform for national statistical offices to share experience in **modernizing legal and institutional frameworks of official statistics** and discuss emerging issues posing legal challenges to national statistical systems. A review of the *Generic Law of Official Statistics* (GLOS), initiated in 2023, will continue in 2024, based on the lessons learnt from the use and implementation of GLOS in more than 20 countries all over the world.

67. The rapidly expanding and evolving landscape of data production and sharing is an opportunity for NSOs to reconsider their position and role in the national data ecosystem. In June 2023 the CES approved a report *Data Stewardship and the Role of National Statistical Offices in the New Data Ecosystem*. In 2024 the work will continue to support NSOs in taking up a stewardship role in different country contexts. The work is planned to focus on a core set of responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards, the related challenges, barriers and opportunities, and consider practical examples of data stewardship implementation in countries (subject to approval by the Bureau in October 2023).

68. The growing importance of integrating **statistical and geospatial information** calls for closer partnerships between geospatial experts and statisticians. An Economic and Social Council resolution (E/2016/L.28) “requests that the regional commissions provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).” Following a joint CES and UN-GGIM: Europe plenary session in 2022, UNECE will continue to promote dialogue between national bodies responsible for geospatial and statistical information. Further joint activities are envisaged, including a joint workshop with Eurostat, and work on geospatial and statistical standards. The aim is to bring together experts from national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies to share good practices.

6. Modernization of official statistics

69. Producers of official statistics operate in a continuously changing environment with the pace of change accelerating every year. The need to monitor and respond to increasingly complex issues that current society faces has led to an increase in the demand for timelier and disaggregated official statistics. As many statistical organizations adopt new data sources such as administrative data and various forms of big data to meet evolving user needs, this subsequently gives rise to additional challenges pertaining to analysis methods, data access, data integration, ethical use and privacy protection. At the same time, the growing competition with other data providers requires statistical organizations to improve communication of statistical products while advocating the value of official statistics and promoting their brand as a trusted data provider.

70. UNECE is working with national and international statistical organizations to create models, standards, frameworks and guidelines to assist them in their modernization efforts. The UNECE High Level Group for the Modernization of Statistics (HLG-MOS) actively steers the modernization of statistical organizations and UNECE provides the secretariat for the group. HLG-MOS provides a common platform for experts to develop solutions in a flexible and agile way through various expert groups, projects, workshops and other activities. The work of HLG-MOS is carried out by four Modernization Groups (Supporting Standards, Capabilities and Communication, Blue Skies Thinking Network, and Applying Data Science and Modern Methods) and HLG-MOS Projects. Expert meetings are also organized on cross-domain topics such as dissemination and communication, data collection, statistical data editing and statistical confidentiality, with focus on new developments. Due to the dynamic nature and rapid developments in the field of modernization and innovation, the 2024 priorities will be identified in an annual HLG-MOS Modernization Workshop at the end of 2023.

71. To meet the growing demand for more data with limited resources, it is important to make the production process more efficient and cost-effective. The models developed under HLG-MOS such as the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM), the Common Statistical data Architecture (CSDA) and the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA), aim to help statistical organizations industrialize and modernize their production system. The models provide a common language to facilitate communications within and between organisations, and conceptual frameworks to analyse the overlap of works, which consequently facilitate the development of shared services. The Modernization Group on Supporting Standards helps the users of the HLG-MOS models and leads the further development to ensure the models remain relevant in the fast-changing working environment of the statistical organizations. In 2024, the Group will work on the revision of GSBPM and GAMSO, among others.

72. The Modernization Group on **Applying Data Science and Modern Methods** works on how to develop, implement, promote, support and facilitate the implementation of data science and modern methods needed for statistical modernization of business processes. Task Teams under the group discuss topics such as responsible AI, selection of appropriate models for different analytical problems, and organisational aspects of implementing ML-based data editing in statistical production. The group is currently discussing future activities.

73. A modern, flexible and agile workforce is important for statistical organizations to ensure organizational adaptability and resilience. **Strategic communication** and brand management have become crucial while influence of non-traditional information sources such as social media has grown stronger than ever. The Modernization Group on Capabilities and Communication supports statistical organizations by providing guidelines on competency profiles, training, management and communication-related issues. The group works on emerging topics in **human resource management** and communication in statistical offices, for example, ethical leadership, culture change, future of work and the strategic communication during the (inflation) crisis in 2023. To respond to the growing importance of ethics for social acceptability, it is planned to expand the scope of work under the ethical leadership task team and organize a workshop on ethics in early 2024. Other future works of the group are under discussion.

74. The field of official statistics must ensure that it remains adaptive to the changing environment. While there are always new technologies and tools coming up, not every new idea is relevant to official statistics. Therefore, it is important to quickly identify what is relevant and discuss how the community could collaborate in a concrete manner. The Blue Skies Thinking Network serves as an **innovation** hub of HLG-MOS. It assesses emerging opportunities for the modernization of official statistics such as digital twins, non-probabilistic sampling and open-source adoption. The discussion focuses on areas that have most potential to help statistical agencies. 'Pitch-talks' and other events are held to identify potential new topics that are of interest for official statistics in the coming years. The network also collaborates with the Applying Data Science and Modern Methods Group to explore the potential of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) for statistical organizations and initiate the development of the HLG-MOS white paper

on LLMs. In 2024, the network will continue to consider new and emerging topics and start collaborative teams to jointly embark on new areas of work.

75. Every year HLG-MOS selects 2-3 topics related to new technologies and innovations that require concerted effort from the broad community. Then these topics are worked on as annual HLG-MOS Projects. For example, the adoption of cloud technology can directly contribute to modernizing statistical production but requires significant financial, cultural and organizational changes. The **Cloud Project** developed guidelines and recommendations to assist statistical organizations on their cloud adoption journey. To innovate the way statistical organizations could co-develop training on new skills and capabilities, the **Meta-Academy Project** explored the “Carpentries” model and created a common training course on Python to test the feasibility of the model. The **Data Governance Framework for Interoperability Project** developed a framework describing a set of data governance elements, recommendations and guidelines to achieve data interoperability in statistical organisations. The projects for 2024 will be determined in the beginning of 2024.

76. Statistical production processes often involve functions that are common across different domains such as: **collection, editing, confidentiality and communication**. UNECE is one of the few organizations that organizes expert meetings on these cross-cutting areas of statistical production, bringing together experts from various domains for exchange of knowledge and practices. In 2024, UNECE is planning meetings on statistical data collection and data editing.

C. Capacity development

77. UNECE aims to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems in all member countries, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to implement international standards and guidelines and to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The capacity development is directly related to SDG 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development” (targets 17.18 and 17.19).

78. Special attention is paid to promoting the *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* which provide the basis for a sound legal and institutional framework for national statistical systems. The work follows the *UNECE Statistical Capacity Development Strategy* (2018) reinforcing the principle of user driven capacity development activities.

79. UNECE capacity development activities include:

- **Global Assessments of national statistical systems**, strategic reviews, and sector reviews of specific areas of official statistics at the national level
- Capacity development **workshops**
- **Advisory services** to address country-specific needs
- **Field projects** implemented in partnership with national statistical offices and UN country teams
- Development of **methodological guidance and training materials**.

80. Capacity development activities are carried out in partnership with other international organizations, in particular Eurostat, EFTA, United Nations country teams, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNSD, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

81. UNECE capacity development activities are based on the findings and recommendations of Global Assessments and sector reviews of national statistical systems. Global Assessments are carried out in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA and are used by various donors active in the region, such as the World Bank. The reports provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. They help national

authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to focus their technical cooperation activities on the identified needs. Global Assessments have resulted in action plans to improve national statistics in all countries where they have been conducted. The Global Assessments of Kazakhstan and of Georgia were conducted in 2023 leading to several follow-up activities. Discussions are ongoing about the next countries to be assessed.

82. A United Nations Development Account project that started in September 2022 will continue throughout 2024, in partnership with UNSD, other UN Regional Commissions, UNEP and UNODC. A range of workshops and other statistical capacity development activities will be carried out under the project. For example on using new data sources such as administrative sources for the Census or using scanner data and web scrapping for price statistics.

83. A capacity development project funded by the Russian Federation will continue in 2024 to support the CIS countries to provide high quality statistics and indicators to monitor progress towards SDGs, with a special emphasis on environment statistics.

D. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe statistical database

84. UNECE operates a **statistical database** offering key statistics on member countries via free online interfaces in English and Russian. This work promotes open access to, and use of, data for evidence-based decision making, as requested in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

85. Emphasis is placed on providing data on areas of high political importance to governments and to the United Nations system, such as SDGs, migration, globalization, gender equality, population, education, employment, work-life balance, road traffic accidents, inland transport, and forest resources. The compilation of data on these topics gives insights into measurement issues and helps to identify priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and to provide targeted support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

86. The SDG dashboard will be further enhanced by extending the coverage of indicators and adding new features with assessment of the UNECE region's progress towards the goals and targets. The dashboard provides quick and easy access to information on UNECE countries' progress in achieving SDGs to a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats in English and Russian. The data are stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata.

87. To reduce the response burden on countries, data are collected from, or in cooperation with, other international organizations when possible. UNECE has continued its work to streamline the database activities, which has increased efficiency of data collection and facilitated timelier update and release of statistical data series. Further improvements are expected in the work related to the database maintenance, such as usage of various Python-based statistical software packages, and data processing through the data science approach. It is expected that using the Python programming language will shorten the software development time and free human resources for design of visually attractive and easy-to-use web applications.

88. The database provides the source data for the report for the annual UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Annual user surveys are conducted to ensure relevance and to identify new user needs. Improvements to the efficiency of data processing tools will continue in 2024.

89. The UNECE statistical database is also used to disseminate data for UNECE policy work. In this respect, the database is a strategic resource for the whole UNECE and beyond.

Annex I. List of meetings from January to December 2024

<i>Jointly with</i>	<i>Meeting (venue)</i>	<i>Date</i>
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	14-15 February 2024
UNICEF	UNECE-UNICEF Expert Meeting on Statistics on Children (Geneva, Switzerland)	4-6 March 2024
OECD	Joint OECD-UNECE Seminar on Implementation of SEEA (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-20 March 2024
	Workshop on Ethics in Modern Statistical Organisations (Geneva, Switzerland)	26-28 March 2024
	Expert Meeting on Statistics for SDGs (Geneva, Switzerland)	11-12 April 2024
	Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation (Geneva, Switzerland)	22-23 April 2024
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts (Geneva, Switzerland)	23-26 April 2024
	Workshop on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	6 May 2024
	Group of Experts on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	7-8 May 2024
	Group of Experts on Quality of Employment (Geneva, Switzerland)	14-16 May 2024
	ModernStats World Workshop (Geneva, Switzerland)	22-24 May 2024 (dates tbc)
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection (Geneva, Switzerland)	3-5 June 2024 (dates tbc)
	UN-GGIM: Europe Plenary Session (Geneva, Switzerland)	2 nd half of June 2024 (date tbc)
	Conference of European Statisticians 72 nd Plenary session (venue tbc)	Week of 17 June 2024 (dates tbc)
	Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	29-30 August 2024
	Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	30 September - 1 October 2024
	Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	2-4 October 2024
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Editing (Vienna, Austria)	7-9 October 2024
	Expert Meeting on Human Resources Management and Training (Geneva, Switzerland)	14-16 October 2024 (dates tbc)
	Group of Experts on Business Registers (Geneva, Switzerland)	16-18 October 2024
	CES Bureau meeting (venue tbc)	15-16 October 2024
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication (online)	23-25 October 2024 (dates tbc)
	Workshop on the Modernisation of Official Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	4-6 November 2024 (dates tbc)
	Workshop on Harmonization of Poverty Statistics to Measure SDG 1 and 10 (Geneva, Switzerland)	27 November 2024
	Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality (Geneva, Switzerland)	28-29 November 2024