

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

**Seminar on Statistical Data Collection**  
(Geneva, Switzerland, 25-27 September 2013)

**INFORMATION NOTICE No.1**

**I. PURPOSE OF THE SEMINAR**

1. In October-November 2012 UNECE hosted the first seminar on 'New Frontiers in Statistical Data Collection'. This seminar was convened to respond to a need identified during the 2011 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) for an international forum to discuss the organizational and management aspects of data collection.
2. The first seminar covered a wide range of topics, but despite this diversity several common themes emerged from the papers and ensuing discussions. The programme of this second seminar is intended to be forward-looking, in order to pursue these common themes and formulate action plans for ways to address the challenges identified.
3. The Organizing Committee for the seminar (detailed in section VI) invites interested national and international statistical offices to submit abstracts for papers which highlight how their own specific experiences might be applied to other countries or organizations. **All abstracts should aim to identify the relevance of the material being presented for the community working in data collection for official statistics**, emphasizing any lessons learned or best practices which can be shared within this community.
4. The seminar is intended for those working in the management and development of data collection activities at the organizational level.

**II. AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR**

5. The programme of the seminar will consist of the following substantive topics:
  - (i) Managing data collection functions in a changing environment
  - (ii) Centralising data collection
  - (iii) Improving the respondent experience
  - (iv) Understanding mode effects and integration of data from multiple modes of data collection
  - (v) Integration and management of new data sources
6. Detailed explanatory notes on the nature and expected outcomes of these topics are provided in Section VI of this Information Notice.

**III. PARTICIPATION AND ACCREDITATION**

7. Representatives of all Member States of the United Nations and of interested intergovernmental organizations are welcome to participate in the seminar. Participants representing non-governmental organizations in a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council may also attend.

**All participants must be accredited by the competent authorities of their country or international organization.**

8. All participants attending the seminar are requested to have a valid passport and, if required, a visa. Applications for visas should be made as soon as possible to the Embassy of Switzerland in the country in which the participant resides, with a reference to the UNECE Seminar on Statistical Data Collection. A letter to facilitate obtaining a visa can be requested from the UNECE secretariat.

9. Statistical offices and international organizations should inform the UNECE secretariat **before Friday 17 May 2013** if their organization intends to participate at the seminar and/or submit a contribution on the topics mentioned above. Please send a short abstract and indicate the topic to which the paper will refer as well as participant(s) name(s) and their contact details.

10. **All** participants, including those presenting papers, should complete the registration form, which can be found on the last page of this notice, and return it to the UNECE secretariat **by Friday 16 August 2013**.

#### **IV. TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION**

11. Participants and/or their offices are requested to make their own travel arrangements and hotel reservations. The UNECE secretariat regrets that it is not able to offer any financial assistance with respect to travel and accommodation arrangements.

#### **V. DOCUMENTATION, METHODS OF WORK AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

12. The working language of the seminar is English. The documents should, therefore, be submitted in English only. The following deadlines and requirements apply for the submission of contributions to the seminar:

- A short abstract of the paper should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat ([fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org](mailto:fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org)) as soon as possible and **by Friday 17 May 2013 at the latest**. Authors will be contacted after this date to inform them of decisions regarding their submissions.
- Full papers, not exceeding 10 pages, should be sent electronically to the UNECE secretariat **by Friday 30 August 2013 at the latest**.
- Documents should be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format. A template will be made available on the seminar website.
- Presenters wishing to use visual aids may use PowerPoint or Adobe Acrobat full screen. Presentation materials should be sent to the UNECE secretariat by **Friday 13 September 2013 at the latest**.

13. Papers will be made available on the UNECE website at the following location: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2013.09.coll.html>. Presentations will be added to this website after the seminar.

14. Participants are encouraged to download the papers from the website and view them on an electronic device or bring their own hard copies. In order to save paper, documents posted on the website before the seminar will **not** be distributed in the conference room.

## VI. EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE AGENDA

### (i) Managing data collection functions in a changing environment

**Session Organizers:** Ms Amy White, Statistics New Zealand, [amy.white@stats.govt.nz](mailto:amy.white@stats.govt.nz) and Ms Tuulikki Sillajõe, Statistics Estonia [tuulikki.sillajoe@stat.ee](mailto:tuulikki.sillajoe@stat.ee)

15. This topic will cover approaches to the management of data collection functions and the challenges facing National Statistical Organizations in the rapidly changing information environment. Contributions are particularly welcome on how organizations have changed or plan to change their approach, and transformation of collection functions to meet the new and emerging demands of the information age. Papers may cover strategies, risk, opportunities and lessons learned. Areas of interest could include responses to the changing expectations of providers and, for example, approaches to managing large and complex units that may affect the boundaries between 'collect' and 'process', the introduction of multi-modal processes, new technologies, workforce issues, efficiency and effectiveness requirements and the potential for use of new methods.

### (ii) Centralising data collection

**Session Organizer:** Ms Jenine Borowik, Australian Bureau of Statistics, [jenine.borowik@abs.gov.au](mailto:jenine.borowik@abs.gov.au)

16. This topic is complementary to topic (i) and will explore the benefits and challenges of centralising data collection approaches – whether within departments, across organizations, regionally or globally. Contributions are particularly welcome which share aspirations and experiences in introducing departmental, corporate or cross-agency approaches to the centralisation of data collection. Areas covered may include use of standards, common policies and procedures, shared systems, services for data providers, funding arrangements, shared governance policies, capability and infrastructure. Organizations using alternative models for data collection are also welcome to share their experiences focusing on how and why their approaches contrast with centralisation.

### (iii) Improving the respondent experience

**Session Organizer:** Mr Hank Hermans, Statistics Netherlands, [hjcm.hermans@cbs.nl](mailto:hjcm.hermans@cbs.nl)

17. Decreasing response burden is often cited as one of the biggest challenges in data collection. This topic will frame the issue differently, asking not only how response burden can be lowered – a task which commonly falls to subject-matter departments – but how the *perception* of response burden can be reduced or otherwise managed. Contributions are invited which share experiences and strategies for improving the respondent experience in a holistic sense. Examples of specific actions taken to influence the perceived burden, and the results of such actions, are especially welcome and could cover, amongst others: ways to make surveys easier or more attractive; the tone of voice of advance and reminder letters; offering opportunities for feedback; etc. Other areas of interest for this session could include approaches to measuring and monitoring perceived response burden; and assessing how different approaches to managing the respondent experience affect the quantity and quality of data collected.

### (iv) Understanding mode effects and integration of data from multiple modes of data collection

**Session Organizers:** Mr John Eltinge, United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Eltinge.John@bls.gov](mailto:Eltinge.John@bls.gov) and Mr Johan Erikson, Statistics Sweden, [johan.erikson@scb.se](mailto:johan.erikson@scb.se)

18. This session will focus on organization-level management and development work related to mode effects and the integration of multiple modes. (Highly technical papers should not be the primary focus of presentations in this session, but may be cited as important background material.) Mode issues will be defined broadly to include collection of data through standard modes (e.g., personal visit, telephone and online response, as well as data capture through administrative records or registers); modification of instruments and supporting materials to accommodate special features of different modes; integration of data from multiple sources; and the interface between multiple-mode and multiple-frame approaches. Specific topics of interest

include the empirical assessment and management of (a) data quality, (b) fixed and variable components of costs for data collection and related work with production systems, and (c) related local and systemic risks.

**(v) Integration and management of new data sources**

**Session Organizer:** Mr John Dunne, Central Statistics Office Ireland, [John.Dunne@cso.ie](mailto:John.Dunne@cso.ie)

19. Sources of data for the production of official statistics are increasing rapidly – becoming 'big', in terms of volume, velocity, and variety. Collecting, processing and integrating these new sources presents statistical organizations with numerous challenges: we are forced to rethink traditional IT infrastructures; to reconsider the legal environment in which we operate; to renegotiate the balance between quantity, accuracy and timeliness in the definition of data quality. For some the immediate challenge with respect to new data sources relates to unlocking the value of administrative records locked away in the systems of public authorities, while for others the frontier has moved to collecting and processing the electronic footprints and signals that are a by-product in today's Information Age. This topic will cover each of these aspects, with an emphasis on the organizational implications of utilising new sources, including 'Big data' sources. The focus of contributions should not be the technical details of the sources themselves, but rather on how they can be exploited in efficient and innovative ways in pursuit of the overall goal of modernising statistical production.

**VII. VENUE**

20. The seminar will take place at:

Palais des Nations  
Avenue de la Paix  
1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland

**VIII. FURTHER INFORMATION**

21. For further information, please contact:

Ms Fiona Willis-Núñez  
Statistical Information and Methodology Unit  
Statistical Division  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Tel.: +41 22 917 1271  
email: [fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org](mailto:fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org)

**UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA**  
**Conference Registration**

Please send the completed form to [fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org](mailto:fiona.willis-nunez@unece.org) by **Friday 16 August 2013**

Please **BRING THIS ORIGINAL** with you to enter the UN building.

**Title, dates and venue of the meeting**

**Seminar on Statistical Data Collection  
Geneva, 25 – 27 September 2013**

**Participant:      Family name**

**First name**

Mr.

Ms.

**Name of country, organization or agency**

**Official Position**

**Professional Address**

**Tel No.:**

**Fax No.:**

**E-mail address:**

**Passport or ID Number**

**Country of origin**

**Valid until**

**Nationality**

**On Issue of ID Card**

Participant Signature

Date

**Security Use Only**

Card N°. Issued

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