Subject: **Data Collection and the impact, challenges and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic: virtual workshop 5 – 8 October 2020**

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to inform you that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is organising a virtual meeting on the Covid-19 response of Statistical Organisations in the area of Data Collection. The event is being planned and led by the Steering Group on Statistical Data Collection, part of the UNECE High Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS). This meeting will replace the in-person Workshop on Statistical Data Collection that was originally planned to take place in October 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on data collection operations for Statistical Offices. The crisis directly impacts data collection operations and poses new challenges, but it also creates opportunities. The aim of the virtual meeting is to share experiences and lessons learned, discuss challenges and solutions, as well as to identify areas for future work and prospects for collaboration. The end result may be that the legacy of the crisis will be an improved data collection.

The following topics will be covered during the virtual meeting:

Impact: Nearly all countries went into lock-down situations. This has directly impacted existing data collection activities. Survey and Census operations were modified, postponed or even canceled. Response rates have changed or impacted various groups differently. There might have been existing practices that mitigated or exacerbated the impact. Examples of topics:

- Impact on CAPI and use of CATI and CAWI in multi-mode data collections.
- Actual development of responses and how did the response change for the various response groups (e.g. for difficult to reach populations?).
- Measures to mitigate the impact on ongoing and planned census and surveys.
- Arrangements you made before the crisis that minimized its impact.
- Practices that exacerbated the impact of the crisis
- New approaches to better communicate with respondents and deal with perceived burden in pandemic situation.

Challenges: besides the direct impact of the pandemic, it led to temporary or medium-term changes in data collection operations. Policy makers and society need different and timelier data to make better decisions in their Covid-19 response. This might have led to new roles for NSOs or the need for providing and collecting new types of data. As lock-down and mobility restrictions are being lessened or removed, data collection operations can restart with or without modifications. Topics include:

- New data needs during the Covid-19 pandemic for monitoring and decision-making by governments and society.
- Role of NSOs in coordinating nationwide (primary and secondary) data collection needed in the national Covid-19 response.
- Impact on partnerships or collaborations in response to the pandemic.
- Temporary measures and changes in the mix of modes and their impact on comparability of data.

- Instructing and recruiting interviewers/enumerators when in lock-down or with distancing rules.
- How to reintroduce field operations (CAPI new style).

Opportunities: the pandemic leads to several long-term or permanent changes. It can have induced as well as accelerated the use of new modes or data sources. Likewise, NSOs have taken up new roles or these may have been fast-tracked because of the crisis. The value of official statistics and of having strong national statistical systems that produced timely and relevant data became apparent in many countries. Potential examples are:

- New modes of data collection and adaptations (CAVI and other new modes).
- New sources (use of new administrative data or none-traditional sources etc.).
- New roles and areas or work in the national data ecosystem (permanent changes).
- Brand capitalizations: increased value proposition of official statistics and trust in NSOs and how to capitalize on this.
- Changes in the access and usage of sensitive data or the ability to use privacy sensitive data.

We welcome your contributions in these areas. Topics should have a wider applicability and not focus on narrow issues that are only relevant for a specific substantive area. We further aim for short presentations of maximum 10 minutes covering specific issues rather than presentations covering multiple different aspects. So please submit multiple short descriptions rather than one all-encompassing abstract. Papers are not mandatory but papers, links to videos or other material can also be submitted without a presentation (will be shared on the workshop website).

Submit your proposed contribution(s) by e-mail to the secretariat (taeke.gjaltema@un.org and gerald.muriel@un.org) or through the registration form as soon as possible and by **Monday 31 August** at the latest. Information about the acceptance of contributions and further instructions will be sent to authors by email. Please note that as we finalize the agenda, it may not be possible to allocate time to all proposed contributions.
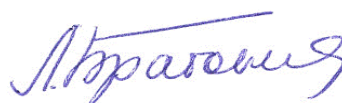
The workshop programme will include virtual discussions in smaller groups to share personal and office specific experiences amongst colleagues.

The meetings will be held in English only. The detailed timetable of the virtual meetings and other relevant documents, will be circulated in August 2020 and made available on the following website: https://statswiki.unece.org/x/9wbUE. Please note that Census related topics might be combined with or scheduled under the virtual meeting of the UNECE Group of Experts on Censuses (30 September-2 October).

Participants should register by **14 September 2020** by completing the registration available here: Click to preregister for the event.

Should you have any questions concerning the virtual workshop, please contact secretariat of the meeting: Mr. Taeke Gjaltema (e-mail: taeke.gjaltema@un.org) and Gerald Muriel (gerald.muriel@un.org).

Yours sincerely,

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