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**COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE REGION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE.
CULTURE STATISTICS**

IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF CULTURE STATISTICS

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The paper provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of culture statistics carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2008. The paper presents the reasons for selecting the topic for an in-depth review, important issues to be brought to the attention of the Conference, main points from the Bureau discussion and conclusions from the review. Information on international activities in culture statistics in 2008 extracted from the Database of International Statistical Activities is provided in Addendum 1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews each year 4-5 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 (UNECE), 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 criteria for selecting a topic for a review are that (i) there are significant developments in that area, (ii) there are significant coordination issues, or (iii) there is a lack of activities at international level. The Bureau decided to inform the Conference about the outcome of the review at its plenary session.

2. The Bureau discussed culture statistics at its meeting in February 2008 based on a paper prepared by Finland, and comments by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the following members of the Bureau: Brazil, Germany and the UNECE. The readers are encouraged to consult the Rapporteur Report by Finland and the written comments on Internet at: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.02.bureau.htm> (paper no. 3 and Addenda). Furthermore, information on international activities in culture statistics in 2008 is provided in Addendum 1. Excerpt of the UNECE Database on International Statistical Activities.

II. REASONS FOR SELECTING THE TOPIC FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW

3. The Bureau selected culture statistics for an in-depth review because there are very few international activities in the area. At the same time, an increasing interest and political needs for culture statistics can be observed.

III. IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CONFERENCE

4. The paper by Finland identified the following important issues to be brought to the attention of the Conference:

(a) To urge international organizations to safeguard adequate resources for the production and development of culture statistics;

(b) To encourage international actors to cooperate closely on culture statistics;

(c) To organise an international coordinating meeting to discuss division of responsibilities and agree on the most important steps that need to be taken to promote culture statistics worldwide.

IV. THE BUREAU DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL WORK IN CULTURE STATISTICS

5. The Bureau discussed culture statistics in depth at its meeting in February 2008. There was general support for the issues highlighted in the paper by Finland.

6. The Bureau noted that the Institute of Statistics of the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UIS) is currently revising the framework of culture statistics. The formal consultation of the draft framework will take place in 2008. A revised framework is planned to be presented to the UNESCO General Conference in 2009. UIS proposes that the framework be discussed also by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC).

7. In addition, the following comments were made in the discussion:

(a) Very little international work is carried out in culture statistics and the resources are scarce, therefore rapid progress in the area can not be expected;

(b) There is no clear definition of what should be covered by culture statistics; however, the decision can be left to the countries. A solution could be to focus first on the core business and then expand the area step by step;

(c) Culture statistics should also include the so-called public culture (regional customs, etc.) and consider the new cultural expressions made possible by the new technologies;

(d) The starting point for the framework of culture statistics should be their purpose and the user perspective; it is important to clarify the demand for culture statistics and link it with the supply side; the framework should also take into account the potential basic data sources for culture statistics;

(e) Regional conferences might not be the best way to discuss the framework as not all regions have enough activities in culture statistics to provide a basis for substantive discussion. It could be more useful to circulate the framework to countries and ask for comments in advance, and to focus the meetings on discussing the implementation and next steps forward;

(f) Good work on culture statistics has been undertaken by the European Union Leadership Group (LEG) who developed a model survey on cultural participation; however, no follow-up is taking place and no international organization is promoting the approach;

(g) There could be more coordination in culture statistics between the UIS and the European Union institutions;

(h) 2009 will be the European Year on Creativity and Innovation by Education and Culture; this can provide an opportunity to reinforce culture statistics.

V. CONCLUSIONS OF THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW

8. The Bureau reached the following conclusions:

(a) The UIS is encouraged to consult the framework of culture statistics with countries as widely as possible;

(b) Countries' attention will be drawn to the framework and the importance of contributing to its development at the CES plenary session in June 2008;

(c) A joint meeting on culture statistics organised by UIS, Eurostat and possibly UNECE could be organised in early 2009.

9. The draft 2009 UNESCO Framework for Culture Statistics is available on Internet for broad consultation (http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev_en.php?ID=7146_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC). Following a series of consultations with Member States, the revised framework will be presented to the UNESCO General Conference in 2009. The UIS welcomes comments on the proposed revisions, especially on behalf of national institutions or international agencies interested in the measurement of cultural activities.

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