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ESCWA

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

# Statistics Spotlight

## Thematic activities in 2016

Newsletter, Issue No.1, July 2016



First Arab Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in Ankara, Turkey

## Introduction

The aim of the newsletter, Statistics Spotlight, is to update readers on the main activities carried out by the Statistics Division (SD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). In its first issue, the newsletter provides briefings on the activities of the division during the period November 2015 until July 2016. The highlighted activities were carried out under SD's thematic clusters of work covering its two sections (the Economic Policies Section and the Social Section), its Statistical Policies and Coordination Unit, as well as related technical cooperation activities and regional advisory services.

## Meetings and Conferences

### 1. EGM on Financial Services and Business Register in Istanbul

ESCWA organized an [Expert Group Meeting \(EGM\) on Financial Services and Business Register](#) in the context of supporting the national statistical capacities in the area of Economic Statistics in general and National Accounts in particular, during the period November 25-27, 2015 in Istanbul, Turkey.



EGM on Financial Services and Business Registers in Turkey

The meeting gathered national, regional and international experts who exchanged knowledge and tackled the treatment of the different financial subsectors in the compilation of National Accounts statistics, discussed the different issues related to the financial services, and identified the most appropriate methods to be used in data compilation as well as the methodologies to measure the output of the financial sector in the compilation of National Accounts. The meeting also highlighted importance and the use of the statistical and business registers within the scope of the integrated economic statistics.

### 2. First Meeting for the Task Force of the 2020 Round of the Population and Housing Censuses in Amman

ESCWA and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organized in collaboration with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), the [first meeting for the Task Force team of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses for the Arab countries](#), in Amman during the period 8-9 November 2015.



Meeting on 2020 Round of the Population and Housing Censuses in Jordan

The meeting aimed at reviving the regional team for the census cycle in 2020. It discussed alternative methodologies for the census, with a focus on the possibilities of using new technologies and administrative records in the Arab countries and discussed emerging issues and related topics in censuses 2020 cycle. The meeting also discussed the exchange of successful experiences between the Arab countries and discussed plans for the group's programme of work.

### 3. EGM on Short Term Statistics in Amman

ESCWA organized an [EGM on Short Term Statistics](#) during the period 16 -18 February 2016 in Amman, Jordan. The meeting was held in the context of the project “Strengthening the Statistical Capacity of ESCWA Member Countries in Producing and Disseminating Short-term Economic Indicators for Sustainable Growth”, in coordination with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).



EGM on Short Term Statistics in Jordan

Participants from countries and regional organization presented their experience in compilation and data gaps. The EGM provided a unique platform for the exchange of experiences among countries in the region and with experts from organizations specialized in the different areas of short-term statistics. The meeting concluded with a set of recommendations addressed to the countries and to organizations on improving short-term statistics in priority areas identified by countries.

### 4. Arab Conference - Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in Ankara

The [Arab Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics](#) was held during the period 5-7 April 2016 in Ankara, Turkey. Organized as a High-Level Forum of official statisticians to seek a broad consensus on the strategic framework for official statistics in the region, the Conference aimed at formulating an adequate response to the increased demand for detailed and timely data to monitor progress on the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda.

The three days Conference was organized and hosted by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), in collaboration and partnership with ESCWA, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-STAT), and Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS).



Arab Conference in Turkey

The Conference was attended by experts from the National Statistics Offices (NSOs) of Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia and Turkey. The representatives of Eurostat and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also participated in the Conference.

## 5. EGM on Gender Statistics in the Arab Region in the Dead Sea

The [4th Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics \(IAEGM-GS\) in the Arab Region](#), was held on 9 and 10 May 2016 in the Dead Sea, Jordan. The meeting discussed gender-related issues in the Arab region and reviewed the state of development of gender statistics for evidence-based policy making. It aimed at strengthening coordination and cooperation to produce relevant gender statistics for policy making; sharing experiences on new collection tools to produce relevant information for monitoring and reporting on gender issues; improving measurement methods to analyse gender statistics for effective programme and policy making; and discussing good practice in capacity-building activities and dissemination methods.



EGM on Gender Statistics in Jordan

The EGM brought together 25 participants from 13 Arab countries in addition to representatives from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); the World Health Organization (WHO); the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC).

## Advisory Services Missions

### 1. Assessing the National Statistical System in Egypt

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century Program (PARIS21) and the African Development Bank (AFDB) have established a multi-organization team coordinated by PARIS21 upon the request of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). With a number of program consultants, the team carried out a [technical needs assessment of the Egyptian Statistical System](#) from 11 to 17 September 2015.



Advisory Service Mission to Egypt

The mission focused on three main areas: Institutional and legal issues; economic statistics; and social statistics. Draft conclusions and recommendations were presented to CAPMAS senior management. The assessment report, which will serve as basis for the first strategy for the development of Statistics for Egypt, was prepared and discussed in a national workshop undertaken on 12-13 January 2016 in the presence of a large audience of about 120 participants from national stakeholders.

## 2. Launching a 2016 regional ICP round in Western Asia for the computation of 2016 PPPs

The ICP team at ESCWA held a series of workshops in the purpose of launching a 2016 regional ICP round in Western Asia for the computation of 2016 PPPs, thus complementing WA's PPP time series extending from 2011 to 2016 which WA is the only region apart from the Eurostat-OECD to complete, and implementing a pilot project for the production of harmonized consumer price indices for a group of its member countries and a sub-regional index. The workshops were held in Istanbul, Turkey, from January 19, 2016, to January 28, 2016, and consisted of:

1- A first meeting for launching the price data collection activities associated with the implementation of a regional 2016 PPP computation round, focusing on the countries which are not involved in data collection with Africa region, from 19 to 23 January 2016.

2- A meeting for the sub-regional harmonization of CPI, a new statistical endeavor undertaken by WA, which focused on a pilot group of countries with similar consumption patterns as a starting point, on 25 January 2016.

3- Another meeting for launching the price data collection activities associated with the implementation of a regional 2016 PPP computation round, focusing on the group of countries which have a dual participation in both Western Asia and Africa regions, from 26 to 28 January 2016.



## 3. Using new Technologies in the Population and Housing Census in Sudan

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Sudan, in collaboration with ESCWA, organized and held a [consultative workshop in Khartoum](#), from 1-2 June 2016. The workshop aimed at assessing the use of new technologies, in particular handheld tablet devices in conducting the upcoming population and housing census in Sudan. In an effort to showcase and learn from a similar experience, ESCWA experts were joined by staff members from the Department of Statistics (DOS) in Jordan, as well as representative from RealSoft, a Jordan-based solution provider which assisted Jordan in undertaking its 2015 census using new technology.



The importance of the event was demonstrated by the high-level attendance of Government officials. The opening was chaired by the first vice-president of Sudan in the presence of a large number of key ministers.

The workshop provided clear guidance and actionable recommendations for the use of new technologies in the upcoming population and housing census in Sudan. Workshop participants learned firsthand about the experience of Jordan in the use of new technologies in their 2015 census. On the other hand, ESCWA staff members formed a better understanding of Sudan's ICT infrastructure including their GIS system, and the countries' technical readiness to undertake the upcoming population census planned for 2018.

## 4. Reviewing the National Statistical Strategy of Jordan

ESCWA collaborated with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) in [reviewing the National Statistical Strategy of Jordan](#), in response to a request by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS). The advisory mission which took place during 17-21 July 2016 engaged with DOS official and several national stakeholders to review and assess the status of sectoral statistics in the country. Meeting discussions provided recommendations for developing a new national statistical strategy during 2017-2021. The strategy will be used by the Jordanian government to draw its future policies regarding its social and economic planning and achieving sustainable development.



Advisory Service Mission to Jordan

The strategy will also help in defining a roadmap with goals, activities and responsibilities. ESCWA experts have also shared with DOS the updated guide for establishing the national statistics strategy and discussed the issues of promoting and developing statistical awareness as well as knowledge management and putting in place the right policies for the statistical system.

In the same line, ESCWA is also cooperating with PARIS21 and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in establishing the national statistical strategy for Egypt.

## Papers Contributed by the Statistics Division

### 1. Synergies between CPIs and PPPs and Integration of Survey Activities

“[Synergies between CPIs and PPPs and Integration of Survey Activities](#)”, is a paper contributed by Mr. Majed Skaini from the Economic Statistics Section - in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)- to the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices (CPI). The meeting was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the International Labor Organisation (ILO), and held during the period 2-4 May 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. The paper presented the different initiatives and projects developed by ESCWA under the framework of CPI-PPP integration. Mr. Skaini, Economic Statistician and ICP Regional Coordinator can be contacted at [skaini@un.org](mailto:skaini@un.org).

### 2. Islamic Banking in SNA2008 “Proposals by Various Experts”

“[Islamic Banking in SNA2008 - Proposals by various experts](#)”, is a paper contributed by Mr. Omar Hakouz et al., to the 10th Meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, held during the period 13-15 April 2016 in Paris, France. The paper discussed the activities of Islamic banking and how they differ from the conventional banks and how should be treated in National Accounts. Mr. Hakouz, ESCWA Regional advisor on National Accounts can be contacted at [hakouz@un.org](mailto:hakouz@un.org).

## Selected Publications

### 1. Arab Society: A Compendium of Social Statistics - Issue 12

Issue number 12 of “[Arab Society: A Compendium of Social Statistics](#)” provides a broad description of Arab society and the region’s evolving demographic and social dynamics. It draws on data provided mainly from National Statistical Offices (NSOs), and focuses on population dynamics, households and families, employment, education, housing conditions, health, poverty and culture.



The report shows that the population in the Arab region continues to grow rapidly and diversify. The population is young overall, but there is considerable heterogeneity in the age-sex profile of countries in the region owing to varying demographic transitions, the size of migrant laborers and influx of refugees in some countries. In recent years, the region has experienced a rapid decline of fertility and mortality.

Improvements in population health and longevity are evident, but the data show clear disparities across countries. The region houses an exceptionally large proportion of immigrants, with the number of migrants doubling in the last two decades.

Ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lower respiratory infections and chronic obstructive lung disease account for the largest burden of diseases over the last decade in countries of the region. Across the region, there has been a trend between 2000 and 2013 of increased per capita health expenditures, most notably in the GCC countries.

Labor force participation is relatively low, mainly because of low female participation in the labor market. Despite increasing female labor force participation rates in the majority of the Arab countries, they are still about half of men’s in most countries in the region. Across the region, unemployment is systematically higher for females than males. Youth unemployment remained high across most of the region, and female youth unemployment rates exceeded 50 per cent in seven countries in the region. The majority of women tend to work as salaried workers (rather than employers or employees).

### 2. ESCWA Statistical Information Portal - (ESIP)

[ESCWA Statistical Information Portal](#) (ESIP) has been recently launched by the Statistics Division (SD) as the main electronic dissemination platform for all our statistical output on the Arab region. The portal offers users, a variety of statistical services and products covering a slew of social and economics areas, while facilitating open access to a wealth of statistical data, analysis, and information on our member states. A large number of our output is offered in an e-publication format, whereby users are able to download statistical tables in a sortable, searchable, and clearly arranged excel format. The portal can be accessed at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/statistics-information-portal>

## Additional Events

We organized and participated in additional meetings, workshops, and consultations during the first half of 2016. A selection of these is listed below:

- 10th Meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, 13-15 April 2016; in Paris, France
- Training on National Accounts, 12-18 March 2016; in Ajman, UAE.
- Workshop in collaboration with AITRS on Supply and Use, 4-7 April 2016; in Amman, Jordan.
- EGM on Water-related Sustainable Development Goals, 12-13 April 2016; Beirut, Lebanon.
- Meeting of the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices, 2-4 May 2016; in Geneva, Switzerland

## Upcoming Events

We plan on holding, organizing, and participating in additional events during the second half of 2016. A selection of these is listed below:

- Workshop for the computation of a Sub-regional Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI); 31 August - 01 September 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Workshop on Business Registers, 26-29 September 2016; in Amman, Jordan.
- First meeting on the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Demographic and Social Statistics, 19-20 October 2016; in Tunis, Tunisia.
- Second meeting for the Task Force Team of the 2020 round population and housing censuses for the Arab countries, November 2016; in Cairo, Egypt
- Advisory Group on Economic Statistics and National Accounts, 3-4 November 2016; in Beirut, Lebanon.
- Workshop on the Principles and Recommendations on Vital Statistics (PRVS), 13-17 November 2016; in Muscat, Oman.

## Disclaimer

This newsletter has been published electronically by the Statistics Division (SD) at ESCWA without formal editing by the United Nations.

Event dates for all upcoming events are subject to change without prior notice.

Visit our website at: <https://www.unescwa.org/our-work/statistics>

Readers' comments are welcome. Please send your e-mail to [escwa-sd@un.org](mailto:escwa-sd@un.org)

