UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

STATISTICS DIVISION

United Nations Statistical Commission
Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics

Task Team on Mobile Phone Data

Progress Report

22 August 2016

Meeting of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, 29 August 2016, Dublin, Ireland

The Global Working Group organized its programme of work in the past years through a number of specific task teams, including one on the use of mobile phone data for official statistics. The members of the mobile phone data team are Oman (co-chair), UNSD (co-chair), Australia, Cameroon, Colombia, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, Tanzania, Eurostat, ITU, World Bank, UN Global Pulse, Flowminder, Telenor, Positium and UNU. The main task of the team is the preparation of a Handbook on the use of Mobile Phone data for official statistics. It builds on projects, which are ongoing notably a project in Oman with involvement of Positium, and a few projects of Eurostat.

The Task Team can build on the work done at Eurostat mostly through its ESSNet with projects in the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Slovenia, and Spain. Several papers have already been drafted regarding mobile phone data, such as the Big Data Action Plan and Roadmap preparing the European Statistical System for integration of big data sources into the production of official statistics (adopted in 2014)[1] and a feasibility study on the use of mobile phone data for tourism statistics (2012-14)[2].

In September 2016, Eurostat will organize a Workshop on Public-Private Partnership for Mobile Phone Data for Use in Official Statistics, focusing on the collaboration between the national statistical offices and mobile phone operators on access and the use of mobile phone data for statistical purposes and to identify possibilities for developing mutually beneficial partnership.

The task team can also draw from experiences of a few other countries outside Europe, such as a project in Oman, which will be presented at this Conference, and a project which has been started in Mexico.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/system/files/ESSC%20doc%2022_8_2014_EN_Final%20with%20ESSC%20opinion.pdf
[2] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/tourism/methodology/projects-and-studies

The Task Team will prepare a Handbook on the use of mobile phone data for official statistics. The structure of the Handbook is:

- Introduction
- Data sources
- Partnership business models between national statistical offices and mobile operators
- Methods to process the mobile phone data
- Applications
    - Tourism Statistics (international, domestic and sub-national)
    - Day-time population statistics (same day tourism statistics)
    - Event statistics
    - Transport statistics
    - Population density statistics

This Handbook will provide practical guidance and good country practices which should prove useful particularly for developing countries.

The drafting starts in the second half of 2016 and will be completed in 2017. Whereas the Handbook will be released in hard copy, it will also be made available as a live document published on a dedicated website where more country examples will be added as further experiences are gained.