

Update of the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics

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The Canberra Group Handbook (CGH) is an important and widely used reference for the production, dissemination and analysis of household income and income distribution statistics. The work of the Canberra Group was extremely influential in the establishment of new international standards for micro level household income statistics (ICLS 2004). Since then there have been a number of further advancements made in household income measurement.

The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) recently completed an in-depth review of statistics on income, living conditions and poverty. An outcome of that review was the formation of a small international Task Force to undertake a limited update of the CGH to reflect the latest ICLS standards and other recent advancements in the field. The objective is to help achieve greater harmonization of income concepts and measurement across countries. The Task Force is to complete its update and report back to the CES Bureau by February 2011.

In its Terms of Reference, the Task Force was asked to:

- update the inventory of countries current definitions of income to see how these may have advanced since the last international comparison was undertaken by the Canberra Group in 1998
- develop practical guidelines to assist countries in the measurement of household income based on best practice
- establish a set of quality assurance guidelines for countries to assess the quality of their income estimates.

The Task Force includes representatives from the national statistical offices of Australia, Austria, Canada, Norway and the USA, and representatives from Eurostat, ILO, LIS and UNECE. The ABS chairs the Task Force and the UNECE provides secretariat support. A meeting of the Task Force will be held immediately before the IARIW 2010 Conference to consider and finalise most elements of the update.

The primary output of the project will be a revised edition of the CGH reflecting the latest international standards and best practice in household income measurement. The paper presents a summary of the work undertaken and issues encountered with the project. It also addresses the need for further international work in the broader field of household income, consumption and wealth statistics.