

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (virtual), 15-16 October 2020

Item II (b) of the Provisional
Agenda

**PROPOSAL FOR FOLLOW-UP TO THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF
THE STATISTICAL COMMUNITY IN CLIMATE ACTION**

Prepared by the Steering Group on climate-change related statistics

*In February 2020, the CES Bureau reviewed in depth the role of the statistical community in climate action based on a paper prepared by the Steering Group on climate-change related statistics, and asked the Steering Group to prepare a short paper with suggested further actions for the October meeting. **The Bureau discussed the proposed activities and approved the way forward.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. The in-depth review was mandated by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) to examine the recent developments and reassess the role of the statistical community in the changing, multi-stakeholder environment of climate action. The Steering Group on climate-change related statistics¹ prepared the paper that provided a basis for the discussion. The paper presented an analysis of the policy frameworks in place, an overview of international activities related to climate change statistics and data, a description of country practices regarding the involvement of national statistical offices in climate change-related statistics, and a list of identified issues and challenges.

2. The CES Bureau discussed the topic in February 2020. After the Bureau meeting, the document was updated and sent for information and comments to all CES members before the plenary session. The outcomes of the review were endorsed by the Conference in June. Subsequently, the document was presented to the 2020 Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate-Change Related Statistics that took place from 28 September to 1 October 2020, together with a draft version of the present document. The comments and suggestions received throughout this process have been taken into account by the Steering Group in preparing the final version of this proposal.

**II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE IN-DEPTH
REVIEW PAPER**

3. For easy reference, the conclusions and recommendations from the in-depth review paper

¹ The Steering Group is chaired by Luxembourg and has the following members: Canada, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the European Environment Agency (EEA), Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Energy Agency (IEA), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Midsummer Analytics.

discussed by the Bureau in February 2020 are summarized below:

(a) National statistical offices can play an essential role in national climate change information systems, but the statistical community has to step up its efforts and engage more actively in the complex landscape of data for climate action;

(b) The *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics* (2014) remain highly relevant; the work on their implementation must continue and utilize the momentum generated by the Paris Agreement and its work programme;

(c) There is an urgent need to look at climate change as a central challenge of sustainable development that requires data and statistics from all domains. Climate change considerations are increasingly mainstreamed into all areas of development work. The statistical community should consider mainstreaming climate change into all areas of statistical work.

(d) There is a tension between making a case for greater involvement of NSOs and a widely reported lack of resources to address the existing needs. A high-level discussion on whether the statistical community can and wants to step up is needed. A CES seminar on issues identified in this paper could be considered;

(e) With some exceptions, there are almost no financial resources dedicated to capacity development in this area. In practice, climate change-related statistics is often considered to be a stand-alone domain (instead of a cross-cutting issue) and is therefore in direct competition for resources with other, more traditional, statistical domains. Capacity development funding addressing specifically the climate change-related work of NSOs is needed;

(f) The time has come, and the urgency is significant, for NSOs to proactively propose to include the topic of climate change in the statistical programmes. But more resources are needed, and the work must be assigned a higher priority, also at international organizations.

(g) By producing more data, NSOs can increase their visibility and initiate the conversation with users. Good starting points are the CES set of indicators and involvement in measuring hazardous events and disasters, where guidelines are already available.

(h) NSOs could do more to improve the data timeliness and frequency, to send a message about the importance of this work. The statistical community can also help to make better use of existing data. It is critical to identify the low hanging fruits but also to have a long-term improvement plan.

(i) Many challenges and gaps in knowledge and data persist. The statistical community has the expertise to contribute, but it has to engage more closely with other institutions active in the field, both as data producers and as data users, to identify the most useful way of contributing given the limited resources. The first step could be a side event at COP26², using the already developed materials and partnerships.

(j) Common thinking on the challenging areas is needed, in particular on measuring climate change adaptation. The statistical community should explore what it can contribute. The international statistical community should explore the possibility of developing a common

² COP26 was planned to take place in November 2020 in Glasgow, United Kingdom, but it was postponed due to COVID-19. It is now planned to be held in November 2021 in Glasgow, hosted by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy. The Steering Group is inquiring about the timeline for side events proposals.

conceptual framework for measuring climate change adaptation.

(k) The statistical community needs to communicate more directly with users about what it can and wants to offer and what the users need. The international organizations supporting statistical offices need to engage more closely with international organizations who support national data users to have more insights into data needs. Some data needs can only be identified at the international level.

(l) The statistical community needs a closer engagement with research organizations for a better understanding to what extent the current gaps in knowledge and understanding are driven by data gaps and to what extent data can help to address them. Short term and long-term solutions are needed.

(m) In addition to the well-established UNECE Expert Fora for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics, additional mechanisms for direct communication among international organizations involved in providing and using statistics, data and evidence related to climate change could be considered to improve coordination, allow mutual learning and avoid duplication of efforts. Such a mechanism should cover not only statistical organizations but a bigger climate data community. It could be in the form of communities of practice.

III. MAIN POINTS RAISED BY THE CES BUREAU IN FEBRUARY 2020

4. The Bureau discussed in-depth the role of the statistical community in climate action in February 2020. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) The paper provides a very useful overview of ongoing work and emerging issues. The topic is strategically important for official statistics but also sensitive – there is high risk and high reward. NSOs in many countries are actively involved but there is potential for doing more;

(b) Official statistics should increase its visibility in supporting climate action. It is still often the case that official statistics is not even mentioned in the work on climate change-related issues (e.g. in COP discussions);

(c) It is important to identify where official statistics can add the greatest value, focus on a few priority areas, and align better with the work in other statistical areas. High-level commitment and prioritising are linked with the amount of resources that NSOs can devote to the work in this area. Partnerships and collaboration with academia, research community, and environment protection organizations are needed. This can be also a way of increasing visibility;

(d) Needs for climate change-related data often cut across domains and should be incorporated into the current economic and social statistics. Overall, the involvement in greenhouse gas inventories is working well. More use could be made of the System of Environmental-economic Accounting (SEEA);

(e) Most value added is generated when data from different domains can be linked, including from outside official statistics. NSOs are in a good position to promote the use of common (statistical) classifications for this purpose;

(f) One of the most urgent areas requiring further development is measuring climate change adaptation. A conceptual framework for this area would be useful but it cannot be

developed quickly;

(g) The financial aspect of climate change is gaining importance, e.g. for tracking the climate-change related expenditures, projects and loans. However, there are no internationally agreed definitions of ‘green’ finance. IMF is planning to incorporate climate-related indicators into the next revision of their economic statistics manuals. The financial dimension could be better highlighted in the in-depth review paper;

(h) The paper should be widely circulated at expert and top managerial levels, including at the World Data Forum and COP26.

IV. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW RECEIVED PRIOR TO THE 2020 CES PLENARY

5. Before the 2020 CES plenary session, the in-depth review paper and outcome of the review by the CES Bureau were circulated among all CES members for information and comments. Austria, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, the Netherlands, Turkey, Ukraine and Ukraine provided comments.

6. The comments recognized the importance of the topic, appreciated the overview, and supported the analysis and the identified challenges.

7. Austria and Netherlands appreciated the additional contribution from the IMF and their activities on this topic, such as experimental quarterly emissions, survey of climate-related subsidies or green finance.

8. Germany emphasized the strength of existing frameworks, such as SEEA, and recommended making existing data sets more attractive for use and considering how to communicate the value of official statistics to different user groups better.

9. Turkey emphasized low availability and limited relevance of SDG indicators under goal 13 and encouraged any efforts on developing metadata for these indicators.

10. Mexico and Ukraine provided additional information about national activities.

11. UNDP Kyrgyzstan emphasized that the lack of reliable data is a major impediment to the implementation of nationally determined contributions and expressed hope that the global statistical community will address this.

V. OUTCOMES OF THE SEPTEMBER 2020 EXPERT FORUM FOR PRODUCERS AND USERS OF CLIMATE CHANGE-RELATED STATISTICS

12. The outcomes of the in-depth review and a draft version of this proposal were presented during the 2020 Expert Forum. The participants expressed their opinion on the priority of each activity on the scale from 0 to 10. All activities were assessed between 5.7 to 7.1, with the paper on the use of official statistics for processes under the Paris Agreement scoring the highest and strengthening the engagement with research organizations – the lowest.

13. A dedicated session was held on the topic of the role of the statistical community in climate action. The session highlighted the potential of official statistics for informing climate action and energy transition policies. Making existing statistics more fit for purpose and developing statistical products, such as indicators and reports for various users (including non-

experts), were considered most useful for informing climate action.

VI. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

14. An important challenge identified in the in-depth review was insufficient collaboration and coordination between various international organizations involved in the topic and lack of involvement of statistical community in the global debate.

15. Since the in-depth review, UNFCCC has initiated regular “townhall meetings” for various types of organizations involved in supporting the countries in implementing the Paris Agreement Work Programme. The UNECE secretariat was invited to present the climate change-related work under CES in a meeting for UN organizations on building the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) in May 2020 and will attend the next meeting on the same topic in October.

16. UNFCCC experts working on building the ETF will also contribute to a webinar on using climate change-related statistics in the context of the Paris Agreement under the EFTA/UNECE Webinars on Climate Change-related Statistics for EECCA countries³ taking place in November 2020.

VII. PROPOSALS ON THE WAY FORWARD

17. The Steering Group is proposing the following focus areas (A to D) and specific activities under each of them.

A. Make the statistical community more visible and strengthen the case for the involvement in the national processes

A1. Side event at COP26

18. Currently the statistical organizations do not participate actively in the global discussion and the statistical offices are not necessarily consulted or involved in national teams or task forces preparing negotiations or national plans, even in terms of data or measurement. A side event at COP26 would be an opportunity to highlight what NSOs already do and what they can offer. The content could be based on materials that were already produced by the Steering Group, collected best practices and, where available, the outputs of other activities proposed below.

19. Italy, Luxembourg, United Kingdom and Mexico expressed their interest in preparing such a side event. ECLAC offered to share the experience from preparation of a side event at COP25.

20. The Steering Group will also consider a possibility of holding side events or sessions at other fora.

A2. A paper on the use of official statistics for processes under the Paris Agreement

³ The webinars are organized in collaboration with the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP Kyrgyzstan, FAO Kyrgyzstan, UNEP/CBD, UNESCAP and Statistics Luxembourg.

21. The Paris Agreement introduces the enhanced transparency framework, which builds on the previous measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. Both IPCC guidelines and the *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics* (2014) defined the role of NSOs in that process and encouraged collaboration between NSOs and national authorities reporting GHG inventories and climate change related information.

22. The reporting requirements for the Paris Agreement include also tracking progress in achieving the NDCs and providing information on climate change impacts and adaptation measures and financial support provided and received. Countries have flexibility in how they submit this information, and it does not have to be quantitative. It will, therefore, depend on the country whether NSOs will be involved, whether they will need to provide data for these reporting components and if yes, what data.

23. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement Work Programme, some countries are re-examining their reporting arrangements related to GHG inventories and are making new arrangements for other components of the enhanced transparency framework. The momentum generated at the national and international level can be utilized for strengthening the cause for involvement of NSOs and improved coordination, not only in reporting but also in addressing information needs of policy planning at national and local levels.

24. **The Steering Group is proposing to produce a paper or brochure illustrating where in the new processes official statistics can/should be used and how NSOs could be involved.** The paper will take into account the outcomes of the webinar on using climate change-related statistics in the context of the Paris Agreement organized as one of the EFTA/UNECE Webinars on Climate Change-related Statistics for EECCA countries in November 2020.

B. Improve sharing of experience and highlight the ongoing efforts

B1. Strengthen collection and dissemination of good practices in climate change-related statistics

25. Within the statistical community, sharing of experience is an important tool to support the development of a new statistical domain but also to improve existing processes. In case of climate change-related statistics, the Expert Forum organized annually by UNECE is the main opportunity for NSOs to exchange experience and discuss difficulties encountered.

26. The Steering Group has been maintaining a wiki platform with good practices in climate change-related statistics. The wiki contains good examples presented at the Expert Fora so far, and other examples on how to implement the *CES Recommendations on climate change-related statistics*.

27. **The Steering Group is proposing to invite countries every year to share short information about their recent activities or important achievements in the area of climate change-related statistics with links to national websites where more information can be found.** This submission will be voluntary, follow a pre-defined structure but the focus will depend on the preference of the country. The submissions will be published on the good practice wiki, and all submissions from a given year will be combined into a background document for the Expert Forum.

28. The good practice wiki interface will be reviewed and made more user-friendly.

B2. Collection of nationally produced indicator sets on the wiki

29. A dedicated task force composed of national and international representatives has developed a list of key indicators related to climate change, including the description of the selection process and indicator metadata facilitating the implementation at national level. The indicator set and supporting materials were endorsed by the Conference in June 2020.

30. Producing the indicators from the set is voluntary. Still, the full potential of the indicator list can only be achieved if enough countries implement it. During various Expert Fora and in a pilot survey on the implementation of this indicator set, some countries mentioned that they do not produce some indicators because of lack of international and national requirements.

31. The Steering Group is proposing to collect national experiences in implementing and using the climate change-related indicator sets in a dedicated section on the wiki platform. This collection will redirect to national websites or databases where indicators are available.

C. Key areas where NSOs can add value

C1. Measuring green recovery and supporting producing quarterly emissions

32. An important role of official statistics in the context of climate action is informing the general public and increasing their understanding about climate change drivers and mitigation efforts. Key thematic areas in this context are energy, greenhouse gas emissions and the economy. NSO is often the only institution which has the mandate to work on all these areas and can produce information combining such data. Such information will also be needed to describe to what extent the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis will be green and oriented towards mitigating the climate crisis.

33. A relatively quick win combining these three areas are quarterly emission estimates, which can illustrate the link between the emissions and the ongoing phenomena, such as weather, economic cycles or changes in types of fuel used with a very short time lag. Producing quarterly emissions can also help to address the need for timelier and more frequent climate change-related data so that they can be considered in the same analyses as macroeconomic data.

34. Other important statistics in this context are renewable energy statistics, fossil fuel subsidies or footprint analysis. Some of these statistics are available in the OECD database for the OECD countries.

35. The Steering Group is proposing to explore how to improve the availability of nationally produced quarterly emission estimates and other statistics important for measuring climate action and green recovery.

C2. Measuring climate change adaptation

36. One of the most urgent areas requiring further development is measuring climate change adaptation. This has been recognized by the CES Task Force on climate change related statistics and indicators and UNSD, based on the work on the global indicator set. A statistical framework in this area would be useful but it would require a lot of time and resources. **The Steering Group is proposing to approach the problem step-by-step, producing small, practical outputs, achievable within a reasonably short time frame.**

37. The policy and research communities working on climate change adaptation have recently

made significant progress and produced various materials on concepts and definitions, and practices in developing monitoring and evaluation indicators.

38. Most of 26 countries that responded to a survey by the Steering Group before the 2020 Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics, undertake some statistical activities related to climate change adaptation, such as producing statistics, linking and disseminating data from other producers or supporting monitoring of national adaptation plans.

39. The Steering Group is proposing to develop a set of considerations for NSOs that would like to start working or strengthen their current efforts in measuring climate change adaptation.

40. The considerations will take into account that adaptation is context-specific, its measurement cannot be fully standardized and may require qualitative information. They will focus on aspects where some common guidance is possible and, in the first place, will tackle the areas of the highest relevance to CES members, based on the survey results. They will also take into account the materials already developed by the policy and research communities.

41. The considerations may include examples how existing statistics could be used for analysing vulnerability or planning climate change adaptation.

C3. Green finance and green investment

42. The financial aspect of climate change is gaining importance, e.g. for tracking the climate-change related expenditures, projects and loans. Activities on this topic are being undertaken by some organizations, e.g. IMF. The Steering Group will follow the developments as much as possible, focusing on methodologies for tier III indicators measuring expenditure on adaptation and mitigation from the CES core set of climate change-related statistics and indicators.

D. Strengthening the engagement with research organizations

D1. Identify research organizations that could be strategic partners

43. The statistical community needs a closer engagement with research organizations to understand better to what extent the current gaps in knowledge and understanding are driven by data gaps. Short term and long-term solutions are needed.

44. To address insufficient engagement with the research community, **the Steering Group is proposing to identify appropriate research organizations who could be strategic partners** and reach out. Some organizations could be invited to become members of the Steering Group.

VIII. PROPOSAL FOR DECISION BY THE BUREAU

45. The Bureau is invited to discuss the proposed activities, approve the way forward and advise on the priorities among the actions described in Section VII.

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