# UNITED NATIONS Draft of 31 March 2017

# ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

**DESCRIPTION OF NATIONAL REPORTING PLATFORMS**

Prepared by the Task Force on Reporting SDG Indicators Using National Reporting Platforms

This document presents information about National Reporting Platforms (NRPs). It is intended to help countries when selecting a mechanism for reporting national statistics for global SDG indicators; the NRP is one such mechanism.

**Abbreviations used in the document**:

API – Application programming interface

CES – Conference of European Statisticians

EFTA -  European Free Trade Association

EU – European Union

FPOS – Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

HLPF – High-level Political Forum

IAEG-SDGs – Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators

NRP – National Reporting Platform

MDG – Millennium Development Goal

NSO – National Statistical Office

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

UN – United Nations

UN DESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNSC – United Nations Statistical Commission

US – United States

# BACKGROUND

1. In September 2015, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN General Assembly. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which in turn consist of 169 targets. A core element of the 2030 Agenda is the agreement by all UN member countries to achieve the 17 SDGs and associated targets.
2. In March 2016 the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed the global indicator framework proposed by its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to measure the SDGs and corresponding targets. The global indicators will provide the framework for monitoring progress towards the SDGs. As established in the 2030 Agenda, its implementation, as well as the follow-up and review processes at all levels will be country-led and based on data provided by national statistical systems. National statistical offices will be responsible for providing statistics that conform with the UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS). At the same time, it is recognized that providing these statistics will require cooperation between all stakeholders, across countries, international organizations, and other partnerships.

**Approaches towards SDG indicators reporting**

1. In line with the FPOS, diverse approaches towards SDG indicators reporting on the national level are conceivable. NSOs choose the model of reporting indicators best suited to their circumstances and capabilities. According to a CES survey[[1]](#footnote-1), over half of 61 replying NSOs haven’t decided yet about the reporting model.
2. NSOs could publish SDG global indicators on their websites and allow custodian agencies/international organizations to download data for different purposes. These models can range from disseminating the SDG indicators in already existing platforms/databases to establishing a separate database.
3. Another possibility is to respond to specific reporting needs submitted directly to NSOs by custodian agencies/international organizations (most probably in the form of questionnaires dedicated to a certain subject).

**Definition of National Reporting Platforms**

1. A National Reporting Platform (NRP) is a means to report national statistics for the global SDG indicators. For the purpose of this document a "platform" is understood in the wider sense as a tool for disseminating SDG indicators (dedicated not only to global reporting) and refers to an integrated web site, databases, and associated IT infrastructure to gather, host, secure, and display information and related metadata and documentation.
2. To conform with the FPOS, a NRP would ideally have the following minimal characteristics:
3. be managed by national statistical offices;
4. feature official statistics calculated according to established accurate and reliable methodology;
5. be publicly accessible;
6. provide national and global metadata in a transparent manner;
7. allow for feedback from data users.

**General objectives of NRPs**

1. Different types of platforms are suited to serve different objectives and visions with regard to NRPs and the national statistical system in general. Objectives of NRPs on SDG indicators might be one or several of the following:
* Gathering, disseminating and tracking national data on the SDG indicators,
* Monitoring national SDG implementation for the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda,
* Reporting national data for regional purposes,
* Reporting national data for international purposes (i.e. global indicator database),
* Popularization of data on SDG indicators,
* Popularization of the 2030 Agenda,
* Promoting official statistics.
1. Depending on the objectives of a NRP various groups of target users are possible. Target users can encompass the public administration, academia and students, international organizations, media and other information providers, business as well as individual users.

# KEY FEATURES OF NRPs

**Determining the suitability for a NRP**

1. National Reporting Platforms are one of several possible mechanisms for reporting of national statistics to monitor the 2030 Agenda. The suitability of NRPs for reporting purposes may depend on several factors - relating to the nature of the indicators, the context of the national statistical system, the current capacity of the national statistical system in developing statistical products, the generation of global statistics, and the existing information technology infrastructure.
2. Developing a NRP may be a good investment when information needs are large, complex, and would benefit from public accessibility. The nature of the UN SDGs, their targets and indicators is complex and ambitious. With 17 goals, 169 targets, and approximately 230 indicators, the national reporting requirements are significant. Further, contributions are expected from all 193 UN member countries over a 15-year span, with disaggregation by several socio-demographic characteristics. Given the volume of statistics involved, the SDGs will require modernization and efficiency in reporting to the fullest extent possible. Further, since the SDGs are intended to guide UN planning and programs over the next 15 years, there is much public interest in national reporting. Therefore, public transparency and accessibility are key qualities for meeting reporting expectations.
3. A NRP may be a particularly good choice in the context of decentralized national statistical systems. For example, in the US official national statistics are produced by a Federal Statistical System, spanning 128 separate federal statistical programs of differing focus and size. In this context, several national experts would be consulted to provide relevant national metadata and produce official statistics. In the US context, for example, over 30 points of contact have been identified for reporting approximately 37% of the global indicators. Coordination balanced with accessibility are key management needs in this context. These same advantages of NRPs also may result when statistics for global SDG indicators are contributed from many national statistical institutions.
4. Similarly, NRPs may also be a good choice where one supranational organization routinely collects and coordinates reporting of national statistics on behalf of several countries. This may be the case for member countries of the EU and EFTA. In such cases, the supranational organization would host the reporting platform rather than each national statistical office.
5. NRPs may also be a good choice where the reporting country is investing in, or is seeking to invest in, its national statistical capacity. Countries who are able (or likely able) to produce national statistics and metadata for the majority of tier 1 indicators, and many of the tier 2 indicators, may choose to use NRPs as a way to efficiently report their own national statistics, and to communicate existing data gaps which might be addressed through further capacity building. In contrast, countries who currently predominately rely on UN agencies to produce estimates of their national statistics through modeling procedures may not find that investment in NRPs is most beneficial at this time.
6. The reporting of SDG indicators is not complete with the generation of national statistics and metadata. For comparability, national statistics must be harmonized and measurement differences that cannot be addressed technically must be made transparent. The resulting global statistics would form the basis for the UN DESA progress report on the SDGs, which is then reviewed by the HLPF. This means that, in addition to 193 UN member countries engaged in reporting efforts, there are approximately 30 or more UN agencies that also will have an important role to play in harmonizing national statistics, generating global statistics, and communicating data sources, measurement, and adjustments transparently.
7. NRPs may be a very useful tool in the context of UN custodian agencies. NRPs would allow the immediate public access to official national statistics and metadata. National information can be adjusted or corrected by NSOs quickly, potentially, to address custodian agency information needs. NRPs can also facilitate a dialogue between NSOs, custodian agencies, and other interested stakeholders, particularly where discrepancies arise (as is the case with any endeavor).
8. Some countries may already have online platforms that can be modified or expanded to facilitate national reporting of SDG indicators. For example, in Poland the publicly available platform for monitoring sustainable development on national, regional and local level has been developed. A new extension to the existing platform will be added exclusively to report global SDG indicators. In such cases, the NRP solution may be even more attractive.

**Features of NRPs**

1. NRPs are well suited to allow involvement of many stakeholders in contributing to and receiving access to official information. Some key features of NRPs that facilitate the achievement of these goals in conformance with the FPOS are described here. Of course, additional and new features may also be devised to achieve the same goals, so this list should be understood as an initial framework for consideration.
2. NRPs can introduce the public at large to the SDGs. The public (and policy makers) may not be familiar with the SDGs, their purpose, how they will be used, and the role of indicators and associated national statistics. NRPs provide an opportunity to “connect the dots” between the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agreement, and national reporting for monitoring progress. They provide a way to communicate and facilitate global commitment and activity. NRPs may provide links to UN background information, national policy plans related to the SDGs, and upcoming national and subnational events.
3. If hosted by the NSO, it may be preferable for the NRP to primarily focus on the reporting of official statistics, rather than articulating either national priorities or progress in achieving the SDGs. Separating web pages containing objective statistical information only from web pages featuring national policy priorities and interpretation of progress may be a way to preserve the principle of objectivity in the production of official statistics. Instead, links to “sibling sites” featuring national policy perspectives and planning may be most appropriate.
4. NRPs can also be a means for collecting input from data providers. This may be in the form of receiving official national statistics and national metadata.
5. NRPs should provide metadata to the public at large. Comprehensive methodological information is necessary for a wide range of users to understand and analyze published data in a proper way. Additionally, metadata will help custodian agencies in harmonizing and developing global statistics. To meet these users’ needs, official statistics and associated metadata also should be provided in a downloadable form and, ideally, in machine-readable format. National metadata should be formatted in a manner most consistent with UN statistical standards, such as SDMX, to facilitate comparability.
6. Because the platform provides easy access to metadata, that is, means to understand measurement of indicators and the associated production of statistics. It also can be a powerful tool in communicating national differences in measurement and, therefore, opportunities to improve the comparability of national statistics and the standardization of metadata formats. Accordingly, NRPs should feature not only national statistics and global metadata, but, importantly, national metadata for statistical indicators. To the extent that questions about comparability and metadata standardization suggestions can be received (addressed, and stored) through the platform, the NRP mechanism can contribute to improved information quality.
7. NRPs can also provide a mechanism for data gaps to be identified clearly, and for NSOs to request suggestions from the public to address those gaps. Potential data sources could include lesser known government data collections, or data collections conducted by academia or the private sector.
8. Another form of important input from NRPs is the identification of potential discrepancies or errors. The NRP could provide a communication loop with data users and stakeholders so that questions, concerns, and suggestions can be received, reviewed, and addressed, and, by doing so, improve information quality.
9. These are only a few features that platforms may use to facilitate the collection and accessibility of national statistics; many others could be explored. For example, newsflash messages could alert stakeholders when additional indicators are populated or additional data values provided. Site usage statistics and listserv (i.e. electronic mailing list software applications) development could also provide ways to gather more information from the public to improve the functioning of the platform. Perhaps most centrally, the development of APIs to pull national statistics and metadata from multiple NRPs could facilitate the harmonization of national statistics and the production of global statistics. To the extent that NRPs could then receive the harmonized global statistics pertinent for their country, this would facilitate NSO reviews and also improve the public transparency of adjustments made. Such enhancements may not require more resources; to the extent that platform information can be formatted in a manner that is machine readable, these functions could be developed through data science techniques.
10. To preserve the integrity of contributed statistical information, the NRP should accommodate several features. First, a staging site should be used to initially receive input from data providers. Access to modifying this site (though addition, modification, or deletion of information) should be granted through a central coordinator (such as the NSO) through a secure login procedure. Version and author management of updates to the platform are also important tools to ensure the integrity of the information provided. Some platforms are written with programming language that allows for tracking of updates by denoting exact changes by author and requiring a coordinator’s approval before enacting the proposed change.
11. In addition to technical protections for the integrity of information posted on the platform, the platform coordinator should also provide policy controls to data providers. Policy controls include establishing a work flow process whereby government stakeholders can receive and contribute inputs to the functioning of the platform, and appropriate data points of contact are established. It is recommended that the NSO play a central role in identifying work flow objectives and organizing stakeholder discussions.
12. There are different software solutions used to develop NRPs. NRPs that are built using open source software are the preferred approach, as this feature aligns well with the overall vision of the SDGs as a shared commitment. Open source based NRPs can be shared without fees across countries for subsequent customization to address national needs. They are low cost means to promote national statistical capacity building in collecting and reporting statistics. They also facilitate collaboration between NSOs and other stakeholders to address common data gaps and data science needs. Of course, not all platforms need to be open source based to be effective. Nonetheless, to the extent that open source software—through initial development or through cloning or forking of a platform—could make resources available for other statistical capacity building needs, such as data collection or documentation, this feature can be valuable.

# EXISTING NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

**Countries with existing NRPs which are considered under the document**

1. In January 2017 a questionnaire aimed at gathering the experiences of countries with existing NRPs was prepared and sent to selected NSOs. The questions specified in questionnaire were divided into 4 sections: general information, form of data presentation, additional facilities and technical parameters. The pilot questionnaire was completed by the following countries: Germany, Mexico, Poland and the United States. The responses received served as a basis for preparing an inventory of the key features of the existing platforms.

**General description of NRPs**

1. The objective with which the different platforms have been constructed is the integration of SDGs’ statistics and indicators into a single repository that serves as a point of reference and source to all users and international organizations producing global and regional reports.
2. Mexico, Poland, and the United States are developing a specific SDGs platform while Germany’s platform includes additional domains.
3. In Mexico the national reporting platform is being developed jointly with the Mexican government, under open data standards, with an open source approach and with further application of geospatial tools. This approach aims to improve accessibility by providing the public with better tools to visualize and manage the data.
4. In the case of Poland, its NRP is already publicly accessible for dissemination of national sustainable development indicators. The platform was created by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (CSO) using open source licenses and is being maintained by the CSO as the coordinator of SDG indicators. The mail role of Polish NRP is to publish SDG indicators (it does not contain a mechanism for data collecting). The Polish NRP was created before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and now is being remodeled to include the global SDG indicators. As soon as global SDG indicators are available in the NRP, it will serve as a reporting tool for global monitoring.
5. The United States provides another example of a national reporting platform for SDGs. The US has a highly decentralized statistical system, with 128 federal statistical programs. Given the interest in SDG indicators, the US anticipated many requests from various stakeholders for access. Therefore, the US needed to develop a reporting solution that would allow public access to national statistics (and related information) for the global SDG indicators. Further, this solution needed to allow for the contribution of statistics and metadata to the platform on a continuous basis. Such a solution needed to maximize interoperability with other platforms to ease comparability of statistics for international organizations and the public at large. Lastly, the solution needed to use open source (and therefore free) technology so that other NSOs could maximally benefit. The result is the US NRP, which was developed in consultation with several other NSOs. The US SDGs tool was reused by the UK and helped them to develop their own version of NRP (see Case study 1).
6. Germany has no NRP platform exclusively for SDGs. Instead, data for the indicators of the German Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the SDG-Indicators are being integrated in the Federal Statistical Office’s (FSO) central statistical information system – Genesis-Online (see Case study 2).

**CASE STUDY 1: HOW THE UK SET UP THEIR VERSION OF THE US SDGS TOOL**

**Background**

In 2016, the US Office of the Chief Statistician developed a national reporting platform as a way to meet the national statistical reporting requirements of the 2030 Agenda. The US National Reporting Platform (NRP) was built using open source software to allow multiple national data providers to contribute input that then can be made publicly accessible. The US NRP can be found at <https://sdg.data.gov>.

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducted a feasibility study in late 2016 to look at options for collecting and disseminating UK data for SDG global indicators. The study recommended reusing the US SDGs tool in the short to medium-term and using services within the ONS architecture in the long-term, once it has matured enough to meet SDG needs.

The ONS SDGs team have been running a project with the ONS Data Science Campus to set up and further develop a UK version of the tool. Work so far has involved streamlining code, reviewing data formats, improving chart visualisations and starting enhancement to navigation. The UK version of the NRP can be found at <https://datasciencecampus.github.io/sdg-indicators/>.

**Setting up the UK version**

We estimate it took less than a week for the UK to get a version of the US tool up and running, ready for adding data.

Outlined below are some of the steps we took and things we considered:

*1. GitHub organisation and usernames*

We set up a new ONS Data Science Campus ‘organisation’ on Github. If an establishment already uses github, it may be possible to set something up within it. Our team members then set up their required GitHub accounts (see US training guide for more information) with higher-level administrator permissions given to one of the team. Within a GitHub organisation it is possible to define ‘teams’. This can be useful to indicate all of the users who are part of the project, improve communication between team members, and set finer grained permissions.

*2. Forking the repository*

We then took a ‘fork’ of the US repository.

Other countries could similarly take their own version of the website by creating a ‘fork’ of either the UK or the US version. To do this, sign in to GitHub and go to <https://github.com/datasciencecampus/sdg-indicators> (UK) or <https://github.com/gsa/sdg-indicators> (US) and click the ‘Fork’ button at the top right. This creates a complete copy of the code, but not the issues. The new website address will then be https://<YOUR-ORG>.github.io/sdg-indicators/, however, a few settings need to be changed for it to function properly.

*3. Technical and hardware considerations*

The tool has been developed using GitHub Pages and uses Jekyll server and prose.io. UK current thinking is that we will not need any separate Jekyll or prose.io server hosting to meet bandwidth requirements.

The only hardware requirement to get a version of the tool up and running is the use of a personal computer for working in GitHub.

For developers the only software requirement is to have git installed on your personal computer. It is recommended to also have ruby installed so that the website may be tested locally. Data managers and data providers do not require software beyond a web browser. More advanced users will want to install git locally as well.

*4. Customising setup*

The UK will aim to provide more information on this in due course but key activities include:

Editing configuration files

Granting prose.io access to the repository

Removing the original country’s data from the repository – the UK ran a script in Python to create blank data files (scripts could be written/run in R or Python).

To note: the code and data are currently in the same repository so any reforking will copy back over the original country’s data and style sheets.

*5. Skills required*

- setting up the tool and repository - proficiency in github and git, basic web development skills e.g. html, css.

- developing the tool – as well as above, additionally need skills in javascript and ruby

- data providers and data managers – need education on using the system (see US training manual).

**Next steps**

The US and UK are collaborating on key developments with a view to sharing code and experience from the enhancements each country has produced eg the UK are developing visualisations for disaggregations and the US are developing a dashboard of progress.

Over the coming months, newer enhanced versions of the tools will be available for other countries to freely reuse.

**For more information**

To contact the US SDGs team email SDGs@omb.eop.gov

To contact the ONS SDGs team email sustainabledevelopment@ons.gov.uk

**CASE STUDY 2: GERMAN NRP GENESIS-ONLINE**

**Genesis Online** was developed within the FSO and launched in March 2002. It is the central database for dissemination of statistical data. It provides official statistics and covers a broad variety of topics. Data for many SDG indicators are thus already available in Genesis-Online: <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online/logon?language=en> . The platform also includes several national and international indicator systems.

The results of official statistics are presented at national and sub-national levels and cover time series starting from 1950 with forecast until 2060.

When the FSO was asked in 2016 to provide a statistical annex for the German Report to the High Level Political Forum, this first compilation of national data for the global SDGs was published as a PDF-document online to make it publicly available as soon as possible. These time series, corresponding to around 110 SDG-indicators, will be integrated into Genesis-Online this year.

Germany has a national sustainable development strategy since 2002. The pertaining 38 indicators are monitored and published by the FSO. Hence, the corresponding time series have been available in Genesis-Online. The German government reviewed its strategy by January 2017. The resultant indicator set now covers 63 indicators. In January 2017 the FSO published a first indicator report and data compendium on the new indicator set. The corresponding time series are now being integrated into Genesis-Online as well. With the integration of the indicators of the German Sustainable Development Strategy and later on of the SDG-Indicators, Genesis-Online will also contain data sources outside of official statistics.

Using an already established statistical platform for SDG-reporting purposes has several advantages: Firstly, the platform provides a “one-stop service” for official statistics. Genesis-user might stumble upon SDG-related data without having explicitly searched for it and thus generating more exposure for the SDGs. The platform furthermore offers numerous features, such as customizable tables, customizable graphs and maps, downloads in different formats, help and FAQ-features among many others. Hence, there are no additional financial or human resources necessary for setting up a new NRP or enhancing an already established platform to include new features. In addition to that, platform-users do not have to acquaintance themselves with a new set-up. In general it is also quicker to integrate time series into an existing platform than setting up a new one.

However, as our experience shows, it is still easier to upload an Excel-Sheet or a PDF-document, than integrating data into an existing platform. Sorting out small issues, such as the tradeoff between a limited number of characters possible per data cell in the database and long indicator names, does take its time. Moreover, an NRP dedicated exclusively to the SDGs generates high exposure for SDGs, whereas integrated in a universal data platform the SDG-dataset is one out of many. Nevertheless using an already established data platform and if necessary adapting it for SDG needs will be, in most cases, more efficient than developing a new database.

**Inventory of the key features of the existing platforms**

1. A very important issue for countries considering building a NRP, is the manner of platform development. This process can be outsourced to an external company, but the experience shows that NSOs prefer to develop their platform using their own internal resources.
2. The scope of data available in a NRP depends on several factors: type of platform (broad platform or NRP dedicated only to sustainable development), national circumstances (e.g. existing set of national SDG indicators) or other choices made by countries (e.g. including MDGs indicators). That is why it is difficult to specify a common starting point of time series which would be suitable for all NRPs. The baseline, or starting point, as well as frequency of data, depends on the individual indicator. The majority of indicators are reported on an annual basis, but some are reported quarterly or monthly.
3. A considerable advantage of NRPs is the opportunity to present detailed metadata. The kinds of information used to describe indicators is very similar in all platforms and includes: indicator definitions, methodological explanations, available dimensions and data sources. It should be highlighted that the scope of metadata should be adjusted to the country’s circumstances and can be changed over time.
4. Reporting platforms facilitate the presentation of data in different forms, such as in tables, charts and maps. The main form of data presentation is tables (predefined or self-constructed, according to the user’s needs). Self-constructed tables are not as common as predefined, but offer features which could be useful for data analysis (e.g. time and column filters, unlimited numbers of indicators presented in the table or comparison between territorial units). Charts are also frequently used in NRPs. The most popular forms of charts, used by all countries surveyed, are line and bar. Visualization of SDG indicators on maps is also possible and makes a NRP more attractive (however access to base maps could be problematic). Usually countries use their own base maps, but the collaboration with other agencies is also possible.
5. Besides the solution related to data presentation, NRPs could have also additional facilities which simplify their usage. English versions and adjustments for the visually impaired are highly welcomed. A very beneficial, commonly used function is search engine, which helps to find data by the theme, goal, target, or indicator name, using keywords or searching alphabetically.

**Summary of country experiences**

1. NSOs have different experiences with NRPs. A general summary of surveyed countries are described below. For detailed features of NRPs and their technical parameters see attachment: NRPs Questionnaire.

*Sources of data*

All four countries report official statistics; three of them (Germany, Mexico and Poland) also have statistics from other institutions.

*Baseline and frequency of the data*

Three of the countries (Germany, Mexico and the United States) consider that the reference baseline depends on the available information, Poland does not report it. All four countries report an annual data; Mexico also has quarterly and monthly data.

*Metadata and additional features*

All four countries provide metadata. Two countries (Germany and Mexico) has a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ section and the United States is developing this section. Three of the countries mentioned that they have developed a ‘Help’ functional, and the United States reported that it is developing one.

*Forms of data presentation*

All four countries have predefined tables; Germany and Poland also have self-built tables. The United States does not report functionality within the tables, the other three countries report various functionalities.

All four countries NRPs allow the users to export data in xls format. Another formats for exporting data available in NRPs are e.g. csv, hml, pdf or xlsx.

All four countries display statistics in different types of graphs. Three of them use maps to present data at regional level. Germany and Poland also use maps for international comparisons.

*Additional facilities*

All four countries have their NRPs available in English. Germany and Mexico report availability on a mobile platform, without specifying any type in particular. Germany and Poland report an adjusted platform for the visually impaired.

*Registration Functions*

Germany and the United States report user registration functions, while Mexico and Poland do not. Three of the countries produce statistics on the use of their platform and search engines; the United States did not report on these functionalities. Finally, three of the countries (Germany, Mexico and the United States) use an API to access the data.

# BENEFITS OF NRPS AND AREAS TO BE IMPROVED

1. There are many factors that should be taken into consideration when deciding on developing a NRP. As every manner of reporting, this one also has strengths and weaknesses. It is therefore necessary to verify which of them prevail, keeping in mind the efforts needed for achieving the intended outcome.

**Weaknesses**

1. Developing the platform requires resources and takes time, especially when it is built from the scratch. Financial and human investments, technology and expert knowledge is needed. The whole process may turn out to be challenging and time-consuming when a NSO has small experience in this regard. The amount of resource will depend on the approach taken - setting up a NRP could be quite easy and low-cost project in case of using existing practices (as it is shown by the UK - see Case study 2). That is why it is very important to take advantage of other countries experience and look for best practices.
2. It is not enough to set up a NRP. Once a NRP is built it has to be maintained systematically. Human resources as well as IT investments are needed to manage the data and metadata.

**Strengths**

1. NRPs provide many benefits for various data users and NSOs. Some general benefits of NRPs from these both perspectives are summarized below.
2. A NRP is an effective tool for communicating SDG indicators with stakeholders in a transparent and open manner. It provides access to the compiled indicators, relevant metadata and other background documentation. Metadata for indicators could include, among other things, indicators’ definitions, methodological explanations, data sources and frequency of data. There is also possibility to indicate, and explain, any data revisions. Consequently, the user can access comprehensive information on the indicator and all methodological changes. However, it should be remembered that the wide range of public data requires increased control of their correctness and regular updates concerning both indicators’ values and methodological provisions.
3. Data published on reporting platforms are publicly available and can be used by various users, including public administrations, academia, students, business and individuals. Moreover, perhaps most importantly, international organizations are able to pull in the data directly from the platform. As a result, countries do not have to react to individual requests notified by custodian agencies and complete questionnaires with data for reporting at the global level. This way NRPs help to minimalize national reporting burden.
4. Reporting platforms serve as a means of improving analysis of SDGs. A combination of data presentation forms offered by NRPs (e.g. tables, graphs, maps) fulfils different users’ needs.
5. Time series of reliable and accurate data is another benefit of NRPs. The baseline, or starting point, of data presented is set individually by countries but usually covers several years (as indicated in the CES Road Map it is recommended that the time series is presented at least from 2015 onwards). This allows users to observe how the values of indicators change over time and find the trend of these changes, showing clearly if there is progress towards Sustainable Development Goals.
1. Survey of National Statistical Offices on strategies and plans related to *Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals* conducted in January 2017 among UNECE countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)