

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For decision

Meeting of the 2014/2015 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 21-22 October 2014

Item 8(b) of the Provisional
Agenda

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE CES 2014 SEMINAR “WHAT IS THE VALUE OF
OFFICIAL STATISTICS AND HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE THAT VALUE”**

Note by the Secretariat

This note provides information on follow-up to the CES seminar on the value of official statistics, held in April 2014. The Bureau is invited to discuss and decide on the follow-up actions to the seminar.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held a seminar “What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate that value” at its plenary session in April 2014. The seminar was organized by the United Kingdom. Sweden and Eurostat organized the sessions.

2. As an outcome of the seminar, the Conference agreed on a number of actions as follows:

(a) There is a lot of potential and interest to continue work related to the value of official statistics. There are things that the global statistical community can do together to **make a paradigm shift from product to market orientation in communicating official statistics. The existing expert groups should be used for this purpose as much as possible;**

(b) The Conference asked the **High-level Group for Modernization of Statistical Production and Services** to review possible actions to share best practices and develop common tools and solutions in this area;

(c) The Conference asked the Bureau to review the work of the **expert meetings on statistical dissemination and communication**. It is important to go beyond traditional approaches of communicating official statistics and deal with strategic issues;

(d) The **CES Steering Group on Human Resources Management and Training** could address the issues related to developing the skill mix that is necessary for effectively communicating the value of official statistics;

(e) The Conference recognized the need for developing **a common language and terminology related to the value of official statistics** and its communication;

(f) **Measuring the economic value of official statistics** through collection of examples and case studies would be useful.

3. The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar.

4. The following groups currently working under the CES are dealing with issues related to communication in general and to communicating the value of official statistics: (a) the High-level Group (HLG) for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services, (b) Steering Group on Human Resources Management and Training, and (c) expert meetings on statistical communication. The sections below describe how the work of these groups is linked with communication and value of official statistics, and how they could possibly follow-up on the CES decisions.

II. HIGH-LEVEL GROUP FOR MODERNIZATION OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTION AND SERVICES

5. The mission of HLG is to oversee the development of frameworks, and sharing of information, tools and methods which support the modernisation of statistical organizations.

6. Four Modernisation Committees operate under the HLG to consider and make proposals about how best to bring about the organizational changes necessary to support modernization in statistical organizations in specific areas, namely (1) on organizational frameworks and evaluation; (2) on production and methods; (3) on products and sources; and (4) on standards.

7. The topic of statistical communication falls under the Modernization Committee on Products and Sources. According to the terms of reference, this Committee considers and makes proposals on how to develop the range of sources needed to support modernized statistical production and services, as well as the various products needed to meet the increasing demands of users. The Committee has operational responsibility for work on statistical data collection, including Big Data, and **various aspects of dissemination** including access to micro-data, statistical confidentiality and open data. The Committee oversees the organization of relevant expert group meetings and preparation of guidelines, and monitors the developments in areas under its responsibility.

8. The Committee is currently working on several of these topics, and will oversee workshops on statistical communication and statistical data collection in 2015.

III. EXPERT MEETINGS ON STATISTICAL COMMUNICATION

9. UNECE has organized work sessions on statistical dissemination and communication since 1998. The first work sessions focused on dissemination to the media. Later the emphasis shifted to dissemination and communication in general, and since 2010 to communication only, to avoid overlaps with other international expert groups.

10. The work was steered by a Steering Group on statistical dissemination and communication. The Steering Group was discontinued in October 2013 when the new HLG governance structure was established, and its functions were transferred to the HLG Modernisation Committee on Products and Sources.

11. The group prepared a number of valuable outputs under the *Making data meaningful* series. The outputs have proved to be successful and very popular with readers. The series includes four publications: (1) *A guide to writing stories about numbers* (2006); (2) *A guide*

to presenting statistics (2009); (3) *A guide to communicating with the media* (2011); (4) *A guide to improving statistical literacy* (2012). Several countries have translated the publications into their national language (Spain, Croatia, Japan).

12. The work sessions on statistical communication were held at 12-18 months intervals. The discussion focused on different aspects of communication, both technical and strategic. Some of the more strategic topics discussed included strategies to improve media coverage, reaching out to stakeholders, re-branding official statistics, building credibility, etc. The agenda of the latest three meetings has included the following topics:

(a) 18-20 June 2014, Geneva: (i) statistical literacy, (ii) communication with respondents and evaluation of communication campaigns, (iii) quick wins on low and zero budget, (iv) good practices in electronic publications, (v) practical tools in producing electronic publications;

(b) 27-29 May 2013, Berlin Germany: (i) moving from printed to electronic publications; (ii) changes in communication; (iii) understanding and responding to user needs, (iv) good practices in communicating methodology, (v) future ideas in communication;

(c) 27-29 June 2012, Geneva: (i) measuring effectiveness of communications, (ii) building credibility, (iii) new ways of engaging audiences, (iv) internal communication.

13. A work session is planned for 2015, overlapping with a workshop on statistical data collection, to allow participants to address common issues such as improving response rates through better communication with respondents. The focus of these events is closely aligned with the priorities of the HLG. Further events will depend on the priorities set by the HLG in consultation with the CES and Bureau.

IV. STEERING GROUP ON HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING

14. Since 2008, the UNECE Secretariat has organised four workshops on human resources management and training (HRMT) with the help of an Organising Committee. The CES Bureau set up a Steering Group in February 2013 to provide guidance on improving human resources management and training in statistical offices in support of the modernization of statistical production and services.

15. The Steering Group organized a workshop on 15-17 October 2014 in Geneva under the topic “Modernizing statistics – how to get there?”. The workshop discussed issues, such as how HRMT can contribute to the modernization of NSOs, change management, training and learning, and job competencies for the future. The discussion on future competencies is planned to consider also the competency of communication (addressing point (d) of the CES decision). More detail about the outcome of the meeting will be provided orally at the Bureau meeting, as at the time of writing this paper, the workshop has not yet finished.

16. The mandate of the Steering Group expires at the end of 2014. The activities of this group will then be consolidated with those of the Modernisation Committee on Organisational Frameworks and Evaluation, as there is a high overlap in terms of both membership and content between these two groups.

V. PROPOSAL

8. The CES Bureau is invited to provide advice and decide on the follow-up activities to the CES 2014 seminar on value of official statistics, concerning:

(a) the right forum to address the issue of communicating the value of official statistics – a new or already existing one;

(b) the focus of any future work on statistical communication under the HLG, including whether to extend the existing work of the Modernisation Committee on Products and Sources to deal with statistical communication;

(c) marketing and communicating the value of official statistics (e.g., compiling best practices in communicating the value of official statistics, developing a common language and messages for this purpose; collecting case studies on economic value of official statistics, etc.).

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