

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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

For discussion and
recommendations

Item 9 (a) of the Provisional
Agenda

OUTLINE FOR THE CES 2015 SEMINAR ON THE RESPONSE BY OFFICIAL
STATISTICS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Prepared by Switzerland (Seminar Chair), France and Sweden (Session Organizers)
and the secretariat

This paper presents the first draft outline for the seminar “The response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals” to be organized during the CES 2015 plenary session. The Bureau is invited to discuss the outline and provide recommendations on the organization of the seminar.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its April 2014 plenary session, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) selected the topic “The response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals” for one of the CES seminars to be held in June 2015 in Geneva. Switzerland is the Seminar Organizer. Sweden and France will organize the sessions. The seminar will be chaired by Georg-Simon Ulrich, Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) or François Baumgartner, Deputy Director General of SFSO.
2. The UN-led stakeholder process to establish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is well underway. The goals, targets and indicators are discussed in different fora. Some of the processes have already finished. The Open Working Group has prepared a set of draft goals and targets (<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>). By the end of 2014, the UN Secretary General will issue a synthesis report incorporating inputs from various stakeholders. The UN intergovernmental process is planned to conclude with formally adopting the SDGs in September 2015.
3. Once the goals will be established, a reporting and monitoring mechanism will need to be set up. The statistical community can be expected to provide baseline data for 2015 and start reporting on SDGs as of 2016.
4. The main focus of the CES seminar in June 2015 will be on the role of the national statistical offices (NSOs) in the global SDG monitoring mechanism. The seminar will provide an opportunity to discuss the role of official statistics in this process, identify whether and how it will still be possible to influence setting up of the monitoring framework, and how statistical offices can prepare themselves to the meet the huge expectations to deliver data for monitoring SDGs.
5. Discussions about the monitoring and accountability of the SDGs are ongoing and it is not clear yet how the monitoring framework will look like. Therefore, **the current outline**

presents a general idea and approach for the CES seminar to be held in June 2015. It proposes issues that could be discussed and raises some questions to the Bureau on how to better focus the seminar. The outline will be updated and more detailed plans for the seminar will be presented to the February 2015 Bureau meeting. By then some of the currently ongoing processes will be concluded.

6. The Rio+20 outcome document *The future we want* asked official statisticians to assist in the process of measuring progress and sustainable development. *Report of the eminent persons* and the Open Working Group on SDGs call for a data revolution, improved quality of statistics, and a regular mechanism for monitoring the achievement of the goals. Learning from the experience with MDGs, statisticians are continuously providing input to the SDG process to ensure that the goals and targets would be measurable. The *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* prepared jointly by UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and a number of countries and endorsed in 2013 are a timely input to the SDG process.

7. Some recent developments that need to be taken into account in organizing the seminar are:

- Work of the UN Statistical Commission's **Friends of the Chair (FOC) group on broader measures of progress** (chaired by France and India) – the FOC is providing statistical advice to the SDG process and has made a comparison between the potential indicators to measure SDGs and the indicators currently available. The FOC will undertake a survey on availability of indicators for the post-2015 development agenda in all countries. A meeting will be organized in December-January to discuss the results of this survey.
- **UNECE Regional Ministerial Consultation on monitoring and accountability for the post-2015 development agenda** (15-16 September 2014, Geneva). The consultation emphasized the importance of the regional level in facilitating exchange of best practices and lessons learned. There was a proposal to focus on a set of about 100 indicators to report annually in the UNECE region. Need for more real time, real context and disaggregated data, in particular on vulnerable groups, was highlighted. It was recommended to use existing mechanisms for accountability, such as the experience with peer reviews.
- Secretary General's **Independent Advisory Expert Group (IAEG) on Data Revolution** (co-chaired by Enrico Giovannini) – the group is preparing recommendations how to define and implement data revolution by 31 October 2014 to provide input to the SG's synthesis report. The group is therefore holding a series of consultation meetings, one of which took place on 8 October 2014 in Geneva;
- **Session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe**, at the ministerial level, to be held on 14-16 April 2015 in Geneva. The meeting will include a high-level thematic discussion on measuring and monitoring sustainable development. The session will discuss strengthening national statistical capacities, using new measurement approaches, and what ECE and its member countries can do to advance the "data revolution" and ensure adequate measurement, monitoring and participation for sustainable development. The UNECE Executive Committee has just agreed that there will be a negotiated document with a concrete mandate and recommendations for ECE work. The UNECE Statistical Division was asked to organize this session.

8. The seminar outline takes into account the issues raised (and expected to be raised) by these initiatives.

9. The following countries and organizations have offered to contribute papers to the seminar: Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, UK, Eurostat, OECD, UNECE, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UNSD.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINAR

10. The seminar will be opened by the seminar organizer Switzerland and a keynote speech. Switzerland will propose a candidate as soon as possible.

11. The seminar will consist of two sessions. The first session will discuss the monitoring of SDGs at the national level and the role of NSOs in this process. NSOs need to play an active role as a producer but also as a coordinator of all statistical producers in a country. The second session will discuss the monitoring and review mechanism at a regional and global level, including strengthening statistical capacity building for this purpose. The seminar will finish with a concluding session to provide recommendations for concrete actions to enhance the role of statistical offices in measuring SDGs.

A. Session 1. Monitoring SDGs at national level

Session Organizer: France

12. The session will discuss the role of NSOs pertaining to the monitoring of sustainable development goals at national level. NSOs need to play a crucial role in producing data and reporting (statistical facts) and publishing data on sustainable development. The NSOs need to control if and how the data needed for the proposed indicators are available, their quality and how gaps could be filled. On the one side, political actors are defining strategy at the UN level, at the EU level and at the national level. On the other side, the official statisticians have a conceptual framework to report on sustainable development which was adopted at the CES 2013 and the statistical notes prepared by the Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress.

13. The session could discuss the following issues:

- Institutional setup in countries: What will be the role of NSOs and how to strengthen this role? How to link this with the accountability at policy level and how to communicate with policy makers? What are the national experiences in coordinating the collection of indicators pertaining to monitoring sustainable development?
- How to define a subset of relevant indicators for the UNECE region? Adapting the indicators to regional, sub-regional and national circumstances: The UN goals are universal but the associated targets do not fit all countries around the world. How to achieve consistency between measuring sustainable development at national and regional and global levels?
- Data provision for monitoring the SDGs: How to find the necessary data? How to coordinate and cooperate with the other data providers in the country (government agencies, research, private sector, civil society, etc.)? How to fill the data gaps, in particular on vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups?
- Need for an integrated approach in measuring SDGs: how to consider possible conflicts and trade-offs between goals, which institution will be responsible for that;

need to base on a framework, such as the one provided in *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*;

B. Session 2. Cooperation in monitoring SDGs at regional and global level

Session Organizer: Sweden

14. The session will discuss the responsibility of official statistics in matters of a global monitoring and a review mechanism. The political community is demanding for a data revolution. The statistical community has to present how this data revolution could look like. The work of the FOC on broader measures of progress is a perfect basis of that discussion. The role of different international organizations (like the UN) is important because they can play both as coordinator and data collector. The statistical community has already some experience with a review mechanism that may be shared.

15. The following issues could be discussed during this session:

- Coordination of SDG monitoring and reporting between the international organizations, and between international organizations and statistical systems in countries;
- How official statistics can contribute to monitoring SDGs at regional and global level? How to link the national, regional and global levels?
- How to implement the recommendations of the IAEG on data revolution (expected to be available by end October 2014): what does the data revolution mean at national, regional and global level, institutional and governance implications, a possible road-map/timetable, means of implementation, link with capacity building? Need of cultural change in collecting, producing, disseminating, analyzing and using data;
- Possible mechanisms for regional reporting and monitoring, e.g. peer reviews;
- Coordination of capacity building;
- How to prioritize the different actions? Is there a roadmap/ action plan needed?

III. QUESTIONS TO THE BUREAU

16. The Bureau is invited to discuss and provide advice on:

- a) The focus and structure of the seminar;**
- b) Issues to be discussed during the sessions;**
- c) The expected outcomes from the seminar.**

IV. NEXT STEPS

17. The Seminar and Session Organisers will update the outline for the seminar to take into account the discussion at the CES Bureau meeting and any other relevant developments at regional and global level. The updated outline will be also sent to the countries and organizations who offered to contribute papers to ask for the abstracts of the planned papers. The contributors will be asked to focus their papers on issues that are planned to be discussed during the seminar.

18. A more detailed outline and timetable for the seminar will be submitted for discussion to the CES Bureau meeting in February 2015.

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