

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of the 2018/2019 Bureau  
Washington D.C., 28 February - 1 March 2019

Approved

Item 3(g) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**CONCEPT NOTE AND OUTLINE OF ELECTRONIC GUIDANCE  
ON MEASURING WHAT MATTERS – BROADENING OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

**Prepared by Poland and the Secretariat  
in consultation with New Zealand, Israel and Slovakia**

*This document is a concept note for electronic guidance on measuring what matters. It outlines actions taken after the October 2018 Bureau meeting, possible next steps and future shape of the guidance material on measuring what matters. **The Bureau reviewed and approved the proposed activities.***

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The 2018 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) included a seminar on “Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics”. The seminar was organized and chaired by Poland, in collaboration with Israel, New Zealand and Slovakia.
2. The Bureau approved the outcomes of the seminar in general and requested more details about the proposed guidance material.
3. Following the conclusions of the October 2018 CES Bureau, a small Task Team including the organisers of the CES seminar (after consultations with session organizers), developed this concept note, with a plan and an outline of the guidance on measuring what matters.

**II. DESCRIPTION OF AN ELECTRONIC GUIDANCE ON MEASURING WHAT MATTERS**

**A. Short description**

4. The title of the electronic guidance will be consistent with the seminar title: “*Measuring what matters – how to broaden official statistics*”.
5. From the very beginning, the seminar organizers have foreseen developing interactive electronic guidance on measuring what matters, as the topic is a moving target and a traditional guidebook would not be effective. The guidance is to be practical and take into account that new topics can emerge in a changing environment at a fast pace.

6. The guidance will explain (i) suggested approaches to new, emerging topics, (ii) how to foresee, react and survey new topics and areas of interest in line with changing needs of stakeholders' and users', as well as (iii) how to integrate new statistics within the regular statistical production of NSOs. The guidance will be presented to a future CES plenary session for endorsement/information.

7. The Task Team decided to use as an inspiration and example an existing document *Managing Statistical Confidentiality and Microdata Access: Principles and Guidelines of Good Practice* available at UNECE website<sup>1</sup>. The guidance on measuring what matters would follow a similar approach. The guidance is foreseen to be concise and available for download in full text as one file. The document will include a short text on core principles and case studies from the CES member states, which could be modified also after the guidance is published. In this way the guidance could be updated by adding recent examples of measuring new phenomena.

## B. Draft outline

8. The guidance could consist of the following chapters/sections:

- a) **Acknowledgements and note** – brief information on who was involved in the preparation of the guidance, how were they created and who and when approved it. Contact details will also be provided;
- b) **Introduction** – a summary of document content and origins. The introduction will mention other interconnected and complementary guidelines/initiatives such as the outcome of the work of the UNECE task team on the new role of NSOs and national data strategies or work on measuring the value of official statistics. A full list of those documents will be listed in annex 3;
- c) **Suggested approaches to new emerging topics** – the section would discuss general approaches to identifying what is possible in terms of new or emerging data sources, new or emerging tools and methods, cointegrating new and existing studies. The section would discuss the issues of new topics, tools and methods; updating existing studies, tools and methods; broadening existing studies; deepening existing studies; exploring new aggregations through interlinking studies, data linking, and synergies. The section could include strategic considerations such as the increasing role of NSIs in building national data environments and strategies, the importance of developing partnerships to understand and measure new phenomena, the role of chief statisticians. Additionally, the section would discuss organizational and cultural changes needed to increase flexibility and responsiveness and to amplify attitudes of openness and transparency, as well as the development of new capabilities to meet new and changing demands, the involvement of stakeholders and engagement with policymakers;
- d) **How to foresee which topics will be important?** – general guidance on how to identify new topics such as a check-list of factors to take into account when identifying and considering new topics for official statistics. This section would propose and elaborate a general organizational framework, discussing stages of the identification of emerging topics, i.e., search phase (with the involvement of stakeholders and engaging with policymakers); analysis phase (to propose provisional development areas); validation phase (with assessment methods and prioritization ranking). This section could include the development of a mechanism

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<sup>1</sup> <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/confid/Managing+Statistical+Confidentiality+and+Microdata+Access>

to identify future priorities, as proposed in the first session of the CES seminar. What is more, this part of the guidance may enable the reader to indicate new emerging topics in his/her opinion by answering to a specially designed test/questionnaire. Automatic adjustment of the survey results and summaries in percentages should be envisaged. Results of the survey carried out by Slovakia during the 2018 seminar can be summarized in this chapter as an example what the new emerging topics are;

- e) **How to identify stakeholders' needs and keep track of their changing needs?** – This section could highlight good practices for engaging with different user/stakeholders groups to better understand their current and future needs for official statistics. An issue of the value of official statistics and promoting its brand as well as highlighting successes can be brought up here. This section could discuss a set of proposed quantitative and qualitative methods for identification of important topics, studies, surveys, directions, including top-down (formal methods) or bottom-up (participatory), exploratory and normative approaches, foresight, Delphi, bibliometrics, bibliographic coupling and co-citation, co-authorship, co-word, co-citation analyses of research papers, scientific journals, popular science and specialist literature, indexing and vocabulary methods, trends identification, as well as text-based data mining, machine learning, artificial intelligence as a supporting toolset;
- f) **How to react quickly and to identify and acquire the data needed for new topics/areas?** – This section could consider the different types of data available, and identify good practices related to “data awareness” in statistical organizations, i.e., how to build up and maintain institutional knowledge of potential data sources and new methodological developments, so that new demands can be more quickly met, or new supply in so far unexplored areas offered. It could also highlight case studies where the “time to market” of new statistics has been particularly fast. The issue of “experimental statistics” would be discussed here as a first step to develop new products;
- g) **How to integrate new statistics with regular statistical production?** – This section could consider the relationship between regular and experimental statistics, as well as many cases where new statistics have helped with the compilation or interpretation of traditional statistics. An example could be the benefits for national accounts of developing certain types of satellite accounts. Furthermore, measuring what matters in times of constrained resources means, on the other hand, the need for evaluation of existing activities and identification of negative priorities, which would also be discussed;
- h) **Annex 1. Case studies** – based on the consultations with the countries that provided a paper or keynote speech to the seminar. The possibility to add new case study will also be envisaged;
- i) **Annex 2. Standard terminology used in the guidance;**
- j) **Annex 3. Linked initiatives** – related national and international initiatives can be indicated here in brief (title and a link to some information on the initiative).

### III. TIMETABLE

9. In January 2019, the concept note was drafted by Poland in consultation with the Secretariat. Then, the consultations with session organizers, namely: Israel, New Zealand and Slovakia took place.

10. The subsequent timeline is foreseen for elaborating the guidance in the first half of 2019:
  - a) Presentation of the concept note to the CES Bureau – February 2019;
  - b) Consultations with HLG-MOS taking advantage of Task Team member (New Zealand) being simultaneously an HLG- MOS member – March 2019;
  - c) Consultations with countries who offered papers for the 2018 CES seminar and keynote speakers – Austria, France, the Netherlands, United States, Italy – March 2019;
  - d) Electronic consultations with CES members– April 2019;
  - e) Preparation of a final text of the electronic guidance and positing it on the UNECE wiki page – May 2019;
  - f) Foreseen endorsement by/information to the CES 2019 plenary session – June 2019.

#### **IV. ACTION REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU**

11. **The Bureau is invited to discuss and approve the proposed outline and timetable.**

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