UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

ECE/CES/BUR/2019/OCT/11
2 October 2019

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2019/2020 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 16-17 October 2019

Item 4 (c) of the Provisional
Agenda

PROGRESS REPORT
ON THE UNECE REGIONAL PLATFORM ON STATISTICS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Note by the UNECE Secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1.   At its 67th plenary session in June 2019, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) supported a proposal to develop a UNECE regional platform on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Conference asked the Secretariat to implement the proposal together with a Task Team composed of Denmark (lead), Canada, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and to report to the Bureau and the Conference on progress.

2.   The present report describes the activities that the Secretariat and the Task Team are carrying out since July 2019 towards developing the UNECE regional platform on statistics for SDGs. It incorporates the feedback from discussions at the meeting of the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs in Cardiff (United Kingdom) on 18-19 September 2019 and describes the steps to be taken in the coming months.

II. MAIN FEATURES OF THE REGIONAL PLATFORM

3.   The UNECE regional platform on statistics for SDGs consists of:

a)   Knowledge Hub on Statistics for SDGs

b)   Dashboard of SDG Indicators for the UNECE region

c)   Database of SDG Indicators (based on the UNECE statistical database)

4.   The purpose of the platform is to communicate developments on measuring SDGs in the UNECE region, provide easy and quick access to up-to-date indicators on implementing SDGs, and to disseminate data and metadata.

5.   The regional platform would serve a broad range of audiences interested in SDGs. The Knowledge Hub and the Database would primarily appeal to statisticians and other professionals interested in methodologies, comparability of indicators, and analyses. The Dashboard would be of interest to the public and to policymakers who would have an easy way to see where their country stands among other countries of the region with respect to the implementation of SDGs.

III. PROGRESS OF WORK

A. Knowledge Hub

1. Overview

6.   UNECE initiatives in statistics for SDGs have generated a wealth of information on regional and national activities and methodological guidance, such as the CES *Road map on statistics for SDGs*, the tools to support countries in its implementation, and links to national activities. Most of this is accessible on the UNECE public wiki on statistics for SDGs. The Knowledge Hub makes all this information available in an enhanced user-friendly way, and consolidates further information on the legislative, institutional, functional and practical dimensions of producing the statistics for SDGs.

2. Content

7.   Since July. the material already available on the UNECE wiki on statistics for SDGs was analysed and structured into sections as follows:

a)   Guidelines and tools include the products of the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs and its task teams, such as recommendations, guidelines, assessment and self-assessment templates. These are developed to assist national statistical offices and other actors of national statistical systems as well as other stakeholders at national, regional and global levels in producing and communicating statistics for SDGs.

b)   Regional initiatives contain material on UNECE partnerships and initiatives for coordination and cooperation on internal and external dimensions in producing the statistics for SDGs, such as the UNECE Nexus on Measuring and Monitoring Progress towards SDGs, and the regional Issue-based Coalition on SDG Data and Monitoring consisting of regional offices of UN organizations in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-East Europe.

c)   Country resources summarize countries' progress with implementing the Road Map on Statistics for SDGs and provide case studies on challenges, solutions and links to country materials (such as national reporting platforms for disseminating SDG indicators, national SDG indicators, etc.).

d)   Teams of experts inform about the activities of the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs and its task teams, including their work programmes and membership.

e)   Meetings inform on upcoming and recent events on statistics for SDGs, listing the topics discussed and linking to the meeting pages with all related material.

3. Design

8.   The Knowledge Hub's entry page contains tiles linking to the five above-described sections that open in a new browser tab. An additional tile "Data" leads to the Dashboard described in section III.B.

9.   The pages of the substantive section follow a similar design and structure, with boxes for different type of material and highlights. Each substantive area has a distinct colour scheme. The pages are on the Confluence platform used for UNECE statistics wikis.

10.   Currently, all content is on a temporary location.

B.   Dashboard

1.   Overview

11.   The Dashboard is designed as the main source for quickly accessible information on the UNECE countries' progress in implementing SDGs. Among various global data sources on SDGs, its main advantages include (a) providing an easy and attractive way to compare countries; (b) providing an easy and attractive way to examine data by sex; (c) maintaining focus on UNECE countries without the need to select manually from long country lists; (d) relying on official data sources.

2.   Content

12.   To determine the substantive scope of the Dashboard, the UNECE Secretariat examined the regional SDG activities by Eurostat, CIS-Stat and OECD as well as the SDG indicators selected for the UNECE monitoring framework for the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014. After review of all indicators, 80 indicators were selected from the global list based on relevance for the region and data availability. All the selected indicators belong to tier 1 or 2 in the global list, that is, among the indicators that are conceptually clear and for which a methodology is available. Many of the selected indicators consist of a set of sub-indicators, such as receipt of 15 different kinds of social benefits (indicator 1.3.1), 8 ICT skills (4.4.1) or 13 effects of disasters (11.5.1), for example.

13.   The data to be displayed in the Dashboard will be sourced from the Database (see section III.C)

3.   Design

14.   For the Dashboard, UNECE has developed a prototype that is not yet linked to real indicators and data. In the entry page the user would need to click on one of the 17 tiles representing an SDG to get to the list of indicators selected under that goal. Clicking on the 18th tile "Sustainable Development Goals" would open a screen with a list of all selected indicators. Having such page should improve the probability of the Dashboard ranking higher in Google searches.

15.   Selecting an indicator leads to a page with the following elements:

a)   a graph with the latest value of the indicator for each UNECE country for which data are available;

b)   a map with countries coloured according to the latest value of the indicator;

c)   a table with all available values of the indicator over time;

d)   a line graph showing change over time;

e)   a screen with full names of the goal, target and indicator and links to the Global SDG Database and its metadata

16.   Where relevant, the graph with latest values (element *a*) is first displayed with values for women and men, to underscore the importance of the 2030 Agenda's gender dimension. A user can easily switch between the graph with values by sex and the graph with the total value.

17.   The line graph for showing change over time (element *d*) is first displayed for countries with the highest and lowest current values. A user can conveniently add countries to the graph.

18.   Navigation on the page is available through a special navigation banner as well as simple scrolling. The additional functionalities available at each screen include downloading and printing the displayed data. The "More data" links in each screen will lead to corresponding data of the Database (see section III.C).

19.   The prototype is tested on Chrome, Firefox and Edge.

C.   Database

20.   UNECE currently provides an open-access statistical database offering key statistics on member countries via free on-line interfaces in English and Russian. The SQL and PC-Axis based platform of the UNECE statistical database will be used for storage and dissemination of the selected SDG indicators.

21.   The Database will contain all the data displayed in the Dashboard. It will provide the possibility to view and download customised tables and graphs and consult metadata. For example, it will be possible to include values of several indicators in one table.

22.   Currently, the data on selected SDG indicators has been downloaded from the Global SDG Database and is being processed for appropriate storage in the SQL database.

23.   For dissemination, the data will be organized in PC-Axis cubes like as in the UNECE statistical database. The plan is to construct one cube for each Goal. A user can construct a table by selecting one or more indicators, countries, calendar years and categories of all the other variables for which the breakdowns of indicators under that goal are available. Additionally, it is planned to build a cube with all the selected indicators by country and year, which will allow making tables with indicators from different goals simultaneously.

24.   Constructing these data cubes is currently underway.

IV.   NEXT STEPS

A.   Knowledge Hub

25.   Material in the Knowledge Hub will be continuously updated and complemented. The next planned addition is providing contact information of focal points on statistics for SDGs in UNECE countries. Work is also continuing on streamlining the structure of the material and its visual presentation.

26.   It is expected to move the Hub from its current temporary location to a fully functional site in November 2019.

B.   Data

27.   As the next step, in October, data on some of the selected indicators will be loaded into the Database and connected to the Dashboard. The Dashboard's functionality with these real data will be tested among different user groups in November. Feedback from these user tests will be used for adjusting the design of the Dashboard.

28.   The Dashboard and the Database are expected to be functional and publicly accessible in February 2020.

29.   The Dashboard and Database are developed in stages. It is planned to add in the second stage national official values of the SDG indicators directly from national platforms or websites, which member countries have asked the Secretariat to do. This may result in different data (and occasionally different indicators) been published next to each other. Therefore, the publication in the same platform of such national data, together with the corresponding global SDG indicators, would require good explanation of the possible differences and careful coordination. On the other hand, the analysis of any possible differences would be helpful in clarifying potential reporting issues around the indicators, as was the case with the publication of MDG data in the past.

30.   The Secretariat is currently exploring the possibilities to obtain national data for global SDG indicators from the websites of countries. Out of the 56 UNECE member states, 35 have (some) SDG data available on the web. However, a first review of these websites (national reporting platforms) revealed several challenges related to data collection from these sources, such as limited availability of data on global indicators (often national indicators or proxies are presented instead), varying formats and limited download options. The use of national data would be feasible only if its download and updating form national sources could be automated. Currently this could be possible with only 3 or 4 countries.

31.   A task team on data transmission (under the CES Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs) is working to develop guidance to countries aiming to harmonize the dissemination of SDG indicators on national reporting platforms (or other websites) to facilitate their downloading (e.g. using API or SDMX). A few countries are also planning to pilot SDMX for transfer of SDG indicators. The Secretariat is following the related developments at international level and working together with the CES Task Team to see how and when the inclusion of national data on global SDG indicators in the UNECE statistical database would become possible.

32.   The planned work will be adjusted depending on how it evolves.

V.   INPUT REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

33.   **The Bureau is invited to comment on the work on developing the UNECE regional platform on statistics for SDGs and provide advice on further steps in this area.**

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