

Meeting of the 2020/2021 Bureau
Geneva (virtual), 15-16 October 2020

Approved

Item III (a) of the Provisional
Agenda

**MEASURING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:
FOLLOW UP ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW AND THE CES DISCUSSION**

Note by the Secretariat

*The session on measuring digital transformation at the CES 2020 plenary session concluded that the Conference can provide a platform for exchanging experience and good practices and for coordination of international activities related to digitalization, and decided to follow-up on work related to digitalization. **The Bureau discussed proposals for possible further work under CES in the area of measuring digital transformation.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. In February 2020, the Bureau carried out an in-depth review of measuring well-being in the era of digital society based on a paper by Canada (ECE/CES/BUR/2020/FEB/2).
2. In the ensuing discussion, Bureau members commented on the issues raised in the in-depth review and more generally on the measurement of digitalisation. It was emphasised that the starting point for measurement should be the policy needs and that digitalisation has an impact on all spheres of life. Therefore, the Bureau recommended expert groups working in different areas of statistics to be asked to identify the impact of digitalisation in their subject matter areas.
3. Further, the Bureau emphasised that the measurement should be future oriented, not be limited to existing time-series and surveys, and not be restricted to the use of specific technologies. For international comparability in measuring well-being in a digital society, it can be helpful to agree on definitions of variables and even questions in surveys.
4. The Bureau decided to come back to the issue after the June 2020 CES plenary session, which had the measurement of digital transformation on the agenda.

II. DISCUSSION AT THE 2020 CES PLENARY SESSION

5. The CES 2020 plenary session discussed measuring digital transformation based on a joint paper by Eurostat, IMF and OECD (ECE/CES/2020/3) describing the activities related to digitalisation carried out in the three organisations. During the discussion, the Conference took note of the following points:

- Digitalisation is one of three priority areas on the research agenda established by the ISWGNA to update the System of National Accounts (SNA);

- Measuring the collaborative economy where products and services are offered via online platforms raises both conceptual and measurement challenges, such as, e.g., for transport services and platform work;
- There is a need for a broader framework, including a set of indicators for measuring the digital society and the impact of digitalisation on well-being;
- Digital data sources should be utilised to develop new and improve existing statistics; investments in digital data infrastructure for data storage and processing will be needed;
- There is unrealised potential in existing surveys and using smart survey tools;
- International cooperation may help NSOs to gain access to digital data sources;
- The Covid-19 pandemic accentuated the challenges for NSOs to produce relevant and timely statistics, and accelerated the use of teleworking in statistical offices. International organisations may play a role in facilitating sharing of experiences and good practices.

6. The plenary session concluded that the Conference can provide a platform for exchanging experience and good practices, and for coordination of international activities related to digitalization. The Conference decided to follow-up on work related to digitalization and its impact on producing official statistics.

III. WORK BY SOME CES EXPERT GROUPS

7. Several expert groups working under the Conference are already addressing or plan to address the impact of digitalisation in their work. These include:

- The Group of Experts on National Accounts jointly convened by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD, as digitalisation is a priority area in the update of the 2008 SNA;
- The joint UNECE/ILO Expert Group on CPIs has been discussing digitalization issues since several years in relation to the use of scanner data and big data, and the price measurement of digital goods and services;
- More recently, the Expert Group on Business Registers, convened jointly with Eurostat and OECD, has discussed utilization and integration of new (digital) data sources, and the measurement and classification of enterprises engaged in digital production.
- The forthcoming meeting of the Expert Group on Quality of Employment will discuss the impact of digitalisation on employment in relation to new forms of employment such as telework and platform work.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND A PROPOSAL FOR THE BUREAU

8. The impact of digitalisation on different aspects of the society, human well-being, labour markets, etc., attracts much attention by decision makers and the media and the public in general. The Covid pandemic has increased this interest.

9. The importance of discussing issues related to the impact of the digital transformation

on society and the production of official statistics is growing. The exchange of experience and good practices as noted by the Conference may be helpful for NSOs.

10. The role of international organisations for providing guidance to NSOs and for coordination of the various activities related to digitalisation has been emphasised.

11. The Bureau is invited to consider the points raised during the June 2020 CES plenary session as described in section II above, and decide on any possible further work under the Conference related to the impact of the digital transformation.

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