

D R A F T

PROPOSAL FOR FOLLOW-UP TO THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF THE STATISTICAL COMMUNITY IN CLIMATE ACTION

Prepared by the CES Steering Group on climate-change related statistics

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Conference of European Statisticians has been working since 2011 to make official statistics more useful for climate analyses and to promote the involvement of national statistical offices (NSOs) in greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories. The Steering Group established in 2014 has brought together experts to foster the advancement of the work in this area. It has guided the development of methodologies and advocacy and has led to increased coordination of work at the international level.

2. Although the NSOs are making progress, the complexity of issues related to climate change has been continuously increasing as well. The Paris Agreement has introduced new reporting requirements, defined by its 2018 implementation rules adopted in Katowice. The policymakers, civil society and researchers increasingly look into socio-economic drivers and impacts of climate change. The number of stakeholders in climate action is growing, and many of them use official statistics. To be able to anticipate and address the future information demands, producers of official statistics will need to actively partner with policymakers, scientists, NGOs and international organizations.

3. The in-depth review was mandated by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) to examine the recent developments and reassess the role of the statistical community in this changing, multi-stakeholder environment. The paper prepared by the Steering Group on climate-change related statistics presented an analysis of the policy frameworks in place, an overview of multiple international activities related to climate change statistics and data, a description of country practices regarding the involvement of national statistical offices in climate change-related statistics, and a list identified issues and challenges.

4. The CES Bureau discussed the topic in February 2020. After the Bureau meeting, the document was circulated to the described organizations and updated with their input. The updated document was sent for information and comments to all CES members before the plenary session, and the outcomes of the review were endorsed by the Conference in June. Subsequently, the document was presented to the 2020 Expert Forum for producers and users of climate-change related statistics taking place from 28 September to 1 October 2020, together with a draft version of the present document. The comments and suggestions received throughout this process have been taken into account by the Steering Group in preparing the final version of this proposal.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW PAPER

5. Conclusions and recommendations from the in-depth review paper are summarized below:

(a) National statistical offices can play an essential role in national climate change information systems, but the statistical community has to step up its efforts and engage much more actively in the complicated landscape of data for climate action.

(b) The work on the implementation of the CES Recommendations, which remain highly relevant, must continue and utilize the momentum generated by the Paris Agreement and its work programme.

(c) There is an urgent need to look at climate change as a central challenge of sustainable development that requires data and statistics from all domains. Climate change considerations are increasingly mainstreamed into all areas of development work. It is time that the statistical community considers mainstreaming climate change considerations into all areas of statistical work.

(d) There is a tension between making a case for greater involvement of NSOs and a widely reported lack of resources to address the existing needs. A high-level discussion on whether the statistical community can and wants to step up is needed. A CES seminar on issues identified in this paper could be considered.

(e) With some exceptions, there are almost no financial resources dedicated to capacity development in this area. In practice, climate change-related statistics is often considered to be a stand-alone domain (instead of a cross-cutting issue) and is therefore in direct competition for resources with other, more traditional, statistical domains. Capacity development funding addressing specifically the climate change-related work of NSOs is needed.

(f) The time has come, and the urgency is significant so that NSOs do not have to wait for being asked to work on this issue and they can proactively propose to include the topic of climate change in the statistical programmes. But more resources are needed, and the work must be assigned a higher priority, also at the international organizations.

(g) By producing more data, NSOs can increase their visibility and initiate the conversation with users. Good starting points are CES set of indicators or involvement in measuring hazardous events and disasters where guidelines are already available.

(h) NSOs could do more to improve the data timeliness and frequency, to send a message about the importance of this work. The statistical community can also help to make better use of existing data. It is critical to identify the low hanging fruits but also to have a long-term improvement plan.

(i) Many challenges and gaps in knowledge and data persist. The statistical community has the expertise to contribute, but it has to engage more closely with other institutions active in the field, both as data producers and as data users, to identify the most useful way of contributing given the limited resources. The first step could be a side event at COP26¹, using the already developed materials and partnerships.

(j) Common thinking on the challenging areas is needed, in particular on measuring climate change adaptation. The statistical community should explore what it can contribute. The international statistical community should explore the possibility of developing a common conceptual framework for measuring climate change adaptation.

(k) The statistical community needs to communicate more directly with users about what it can and wants to offer and what the users needs. The international organizations supporting the statistical offices, need to engage more closely with international organizations who support

¹ COP26 was planned to take place in November 2020 in Glasgow, United Kingdom but it was postponed due to COVID-19. New dates for a rescheduled conference in 2021, hosted in Glasgow by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy, has not been set out as of the time of drafting of this paper.

national data users to have more insights into data needs. Some data needs can only be identified at the international level.

(l) The statistical community needs a closer engagement with research organizations for a better understanding to what extent the current gaps in knowledge and understanding are driven by data gaps and to what extent data can help to address them. Short term and long-term solutions are needed.

(m) In addition to the well-established UNECE Expert Fora for producers and users of climate change-related statistics, additional mechanisms for direct communication among international organizations involved in providing and using statistics, data and evidence related to climate change could be considered to improve coordination, allow mutual learning and avoid duplication of efforts. Such a mechanism should cover not only statistical organizations but a bigger climate data community. It could be in the form of communities of practice.

III. DISCUSSION BY THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

6. The Bureau discussed in-depth the role of the statistical community in climate action based on a paper by the Steering Group on climate change-related statistics. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) The paper provides a very useful overview of ongoing work and emerging issues. The topic is strategically important for official statistics but also sensitive – there is high risk and high reward. NSOs in many countries are actively involved but there is potential for doing more;

(b) Official statistics should increase its visibility in supporting climate action. It is still often the case that official statistics is not even mentioned in the work on climate change-related issues (e.g. in COP discussions);

(c) It is important to identify where official statistics can add the greatest value, focus on a few priority areas, and align better with the work in other statistical areas. High-level commitment and prioritising is linked with the amount of resources that NSOs can devote to the work in this area. Partnerships and collaboration with academia, research community, and environment protection organizations are needed. This can be also a way of increasing visibility;

(d) Needs for climate change-related data often cut across domains and should be incorporated into the current economic and social statistics. Overall, the involvement in greenhouse gas inventories is working well. More use could be made of the System of Environmental-economic Accounting (SEEA);

(e) Most value added is generated when data from different domains can be linked, including from outside official statistics. NSOs are in a good position to promote the use of common (statistical) classifications for this purpose;

(f) One of the most urgent areas requiring further development is measuring climate change adaptation. A conceptual framework for this area would be useful but it cannot be developed quickly;

(g) The financial aspect of climate change is gaining importance, e.g. for tracking the climate-change related expenditures, projects and loans. However, there are no internationally

agreed definitions of ‘green’ finance. IMF is planning to incorporate climate-related indicators into the next revision of their economic statistics manuals. The financial dimension could be better highlighted in the in-depth review paper;

(h) The paper needs to be updated to reflect recent developments. After updating, it should be widely circulated at expert and top managerial levels, including at the World Data Forum and COP26.

IV. PROPOSALS ON THE WAY FORWARD

7. The Steering Group is proposing the following activities to address the identified challenges:

(a) Make the statistical community more visible and strengthen the case for the involvement in the national processes

1. A side event at COP26

8. Currently the statistical organizations do not participate actively in the global discussion and the statistical offices are not necessarily consulted or involved in national teams or task forces preparing negotiations or national plans, even in terms of data or measurement. A side event at COP26 would be an opportunity to highlight what NSOs already do and what they can offer. The content could be based at least in part on materials that were already produced by the Steering Group and collected best practices.

9. The Steering Group will also consider possibility of holding side events or sessions at other fora.

2. A paper on the use of official statistics in the processes related to the Paris Agreement

10. The Paris Agreement introduces the enhanced transparency framework (ETF), which builds on the previous measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. Both IPCC guidelines and the CES Recommendations defined the role of NSOs in that process and encouraged collaboration between NSOs and national authorities reporting GHG inventories and climate change related information.

11. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement Work Programme, some countries are re-examining their reporting arrangements. The momentum generated by the Paris Agreement at the national and international level can be utilized for a strengthening the cause for involvement of NSOs and improved coordination.

12. The reporting requirements for the Paris Agreement include also tracking progress in achieving the NDCs and providing information on climate change impacts and adaptation measures and financial support provided and received. Countries have flexibility in how they submit this information, and it does not have to be quantitative. It will, therefore, depend on the country whether NSOs will be involved, whether they will need to provide data for these reporting components and if yes, what data.

13. The Steering Group is proposing to update and complement the previously developed advocacy materials and produce a paper or brochure illustrating where in the new processes official statistics can/should be used and how NSOs could be involved.

(b) Improve experience sharing and highlight the ongoing efforts

1. An annual report on country activities in CCRS

14. Within the statistical community, the experience sharing is an important tool aiming to support the development of a new statistical domain but also to improve existing statistical system. In the domain of CCRS, the Expert Forum organized annually by UNECE is the main opportunity for NSI to compare national systems and exchange on encountered difficulties.

15. However, the Expert Forum has three disadvantages as an experience sharing platform:

(a) Participation of some countries may be limited due to budgetary limitations. Consequently, some countries may not have the opportunity to participate in the exchange of ideas and good practices;

(b) Time to present national experiences at the Expert Forum is limited. The organizers try to select typical country cases, but a more valuable and detailed exchange could take place if various countries having similar processes could present.

(c) Only limited information can be given during a country presentation. Due to time limitations, speakers must select the main elements of their system and not all information useful for participants can be presented.

16. To address these disadvantages, the Steering Group proposes to develop another communication tool on CCRS between countries, namely an annual report on country activities, to complement the Expert Forum.

17. It is proposed to invite countries to present their activities in the domain of CCRS via short national submissions. This submission will be on voluntary basis and ideally updated annually. Each national submission will be published on the wiki website for an easy access to participants at any time. At the same time, an annual report aggregating all submissions will be prepared as background document for Expert Forum.

2. Collection of produced national indicator sets on the wiki

18. Under the supervision of the Steering Group, a dedicated task force composed of national and international representatives has worked intensively to propose a list of key indicators related to climate change. The process leading to the selection of these indicators and complete metadata sheets for each indicator have been developed for an easy implementation at national level.

19. During various Expert Fora and also in a survey on the difficulties encountered to implement these CCRI, some countries mentioned the lack of national or international obligations requested the calculation of these indicators.

20. The Steering Group has always emphasized that the exercise is voluntary. Nevertheless, the full potential of the indicator list can only be achieved if enough countries implement it. The Steering Group and the UNECE secretariat are ready to help countries by answering methodological questions, but technical support is not enough to enhance the dissemination of this reporting tool.

21. For this reason, SG proposes to highlight good practices in the implementation of national CCRI lists and create a dedicated section on the wiki website and collect all the national

experiences in implementing and using the CCRI.

(c) Focus on key areas

1. Measuring green recovery and supporting producing quarterly emissions

22. NSOs have a unique mandate on data on energy, emissions and economy, which could serve to illustrate green recovery; for example, with quick estimates of quarterly emissions. The IMF contribution to the in-depth review underlined that climate-change related data need to be available with the same frequency as macroeconomic data to make sure that they are included in the same analyses. Another example, there are the OECD effective carbon rates but there are no national data to compare. The Steering Group could explore how to improve the availability of such national data.

2. An activity on measuring adaptation

23. One of the most urgent areas requiring further development is measuring climate change adaptation. A conceptual framework in this area would be useful but it would require a lot of time and resources than is available to the Steering Group. The Steering Group is proposing to approach the problem step-by-step, producing small, practical outputs, achievable within a reasonably short time frame. This could include:

(a) Reviewing/mapping how existing statistics could be used for analysing vulnerability or planning climate change adaptation and/or

(b) A list of considerations for NSOs that would like to start working on this area.

3. Follow the developments related to statistics on green finance and green investment

24. The financial aspect of climate change is gaining importance, e.g. for tracking the climate-change related expenditures, projects and loans. Activities on this topic are being undertaken by some organizations, e.g. IMF. The Steering Group will follow the developments as much as possible, focusing on developments concerning methodologies for tier III indicators measuring expenditure on adaptation and mitigation from the CES core CCRSI set.

(d) Strengthening the engagement with research organizations

1. Identify research organizations who could be strategic partners

25. The statistical community needs a closer engagement with research organizations for a better understanding to what extent the current gaps in knowledge and understanding are driven by data gaps and to what extent data can help to address them. Short term and long-term solutions are needed.

26. To address insufficient engagement with the research community, the Steering Group is proposing to identify appropriate research organizations who could be strategic partners and reach out. Some organizations could be invited to become members of the Steering Group. Research groups who have international organizations as members could also be looked into.

* * * * *