

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON DATA STEWARDSHIP

Note prepared by Estonia and UNECE

Following the discussions on data stewardship at CES and its Bureau meetings, in October 2020 the Bureau decided to set up a Task Force to take the work forward, and asked the terms of reference for the group to be submitted to the February 2021 Bureau meeting.

The Bureau reviewed and approved the terms of reference for a Task Force on data stewardship.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau have discussed data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystems at several occasions, including at CES plenary sessions in 2019 and 2020, and taken into account outcomes of similar discussions at EU, OECD and global level meetings. These discussions have converged towards proposals for practical ways forward to enhance the role of NSOs in the new data ecosystems and in public data governance.
2. The Conference in 2019 noted that a concrete action plan for supporting National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as part of a larger data ecosystem and sharing of good practices are needed, and asked for harmonising the main terms of data governance/stewardship to provide basis for developing common principles and standards. The Conference noted that defining a minimum set of core responsibilities for a data steward would be useful.
3. The CES 2020 session “Data stewardship – NSOs in the changing world” continued the discussion, based on a paper by an informal task team (consisting of Albania, Canada, Estonia (lead), Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and UNECE). The paper (ECE/CES/2020/10) included twenty-one considerations how NSOs can enhance their role in data governance, and a proposed action plan that can serve as a road map for NSOs wishing to increase their role in public data governance.
4. The Conference concluded that the role of NSOs is changing in response to new demands and opportunities. This has been accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. NSOs can position themselves in the new data ecosystem in different ways, with a range of possibilities from minimal change to full data stewardship. NSOs are at different starting points, some already have cross-government roles, and there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.
5. The Conference emphasized the need to continue the discussion and sharing ideas and experiences. It concluded with a proposal to set up a Task Force to turn the considerations in

the paper from Estonia et al. into a roadmap and action plan to support NSOs. In doing so, it is important to take into account the legal basis, and recognize that NSOs can move forward at their own pace and take on a stewardship role to a different degree. A “maturity model” approach, as used in modernization and capacity development activities, could be useful. A strong link to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics should be maintained to clarify what statistical offices can and can not do, and avoid undermining trust in official statistics, while considering what can be done and what can be facilitated by NSO in the data steward role.

6. The Bureau discussed data stewardship in October 2020, decided to create a Task Force to take the work forward, and asked the terms of reference for the group to be submitted to the February 2021 Bureau meeting. The work should be done in two stages: first, defining the concepts and looking at possible tasks/responsibilities, and in a later stage developing recommendations. It will be good to involve also representatives from the government side in the Task Force.

7. Some work on data stewardship at the global level has been started by the UN Statistical Commission. A stocktaking exercise is carried out under the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB). The group will report to UNSC in March 2021. The Task Force will build on the outcomes of this exercise and take into account the results at the global level to avoid duplication of work.

8. The current terms of reference are submitted to the Bureau for approval.

II. MANDATE

9. The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from February 2021 to June 2023.

III. OBJECTIVES

10. The aim of the Task Force is to clarify the terms related to data stewardship and public data governance, and the tasks of NSOs that this may include in different settings. This could serve as a basis for developing guidance, in a later stage, on the role of NSOs in the new data ecosystem.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

11. The Task Force will focus on the following activities:

- a) Defining ‘data stewardship’ and the related terms (data governance, curation, etc.);
- b) Developing a set of possible responsibilities of a data steward (based on the experience of countries who are undertaking this role, e.g. what kind of data can be covered, what kind of functions/activities/roles undertaken by NSO, etc.) and considerations to be taken into account in shaping the NSO role in this area. This can serve as a basis for identifying a minimum core set of responsibilities and a maturity model of data stewardship;
- c) Developing a toolkit of good practices and tools for implementing the role of data steward;

d) Clarifying what NSOs can and what they can not do in this respect, consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

12. On this basis, as a follow-up to the Task Force in a later stage, recommendations and guidance to NSOs could be developed.

V. TIMETABLE

13. The activities of the Task Force are planned for the period from February 2021 to June 2023, according to the following tentative schedule:

Feb-March 2021	Establishment of the Task Force and drafting of a work plan with activities, timing and division of work
April-June 2021	Collecting and reviewing current best practices of data governance and stewardship, developing a minimum set of core responsibilities for a data steward
Sept-Oct 2021	Compiling a minimum set of core responsibilities for a data steward, including main definitions of data governance
Oct 2021	Presenting an interim report (definitions and core responsibilities) to the CES Bureau
Oct-Nov 2021	Finalising the minimum set of core responsibilities and the main definitions
Dec-March 2022	Collecting feedback from CES members and other major stakeholders, including the members' maturity assessment in relation to the core responsibilities
April-Sept 2022	Drafting first version of a data stewardship maturity model and guidelines
Oct 2022	Presenting the draft maturity model and guidelines to the CES Bureau
Oct-Nov 2022	Reviewing guidelines and developing a practical toolkit
Dec 2022-May 2023	Finalising data governance guidelines, including a minimum set of core responsibilities for a data steward and practical toolkit 1.0
June 2023	Expected endorsement by the CES plenary session

VI. METHODS OF WORK

14. The Task Force will primarily work via e-mail, wiki workspace, and audio or video conferences. When physical meetings will become possible, a face-to-face meeting of the Task Force may be held back-to-back with an international meeting where all the Task Force members participate.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

15. Canada, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Eurostat and OECD have expressed willingness to be members of the Task Force. Other countries and organizations may

be invited to participate to ensure that the membership reflects different situations and perspectives in countries. Estonia will chair the Task Force.

16. The secretariat will be provided by UNECE.

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