

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2021/2022 Bureau
Geneva (online), 13-14 October 2021

Item IV(c) of the Provisional
Agenda

FOLLOW-UP WORK ON CORE VALUES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Prepared by Ireland and UNECE

The CES 2021 plenary session discussed “How national statistical systems adhere to the core values of official statistics”, and concluded with a proposal to initiate a conversation within the official statistics community to elaborate a list of core values of official statistics. The Bureau was asked to oversee this work, including mapping the core values to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and defining behaviours that support the core values and implementation of the Fundamental Principles. This note summarises progress so far, and proposes next steps.

The Bureau discussed the progress so far and approved the next steps.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Following the discussion on “How national statistical systems adhere to the core values of official statistics” at the June 2021 Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), the Conference noted the importance of explicitly recognising, upholding and demonstrating the core values of official statistics, and requested:

- a. The Secretariat to initiate a conversation within the official statistics community to elaborate a list of core values of official statistics;
 - b. The Bureau to oversee this work, including mapping the core values to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and defining behaviours that support the core values and implementation of the Fundamental Principles;
 - c. The Secretariat to report on progress at the 70th CES plenary session in 2022.
2. A Task Team was formed to take this work forward under the leadership of Ireland, and composing members from Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom.
3. In parallel, the UNECE Secretariat initiated an on-line conversation across the international statistical community to gather ideas on what constitute the core values of official statistics. This conversation ran from 1 July to 13 September 2021, and was hosted on the Global Network of

Data Officers and Statisticians, a social media-style platform managed by the UN Statistical Division, with over 2000 members who are working in and with official statistics. The conversation was also publicised using LinkedIn and Twitter, where several suggestions were also received. In total, there were around 40 contributions to the conversation, and over 200 other interactions, mostly in the form of “likes”.

4. The Task Team met on 30 September to review the outcomes of the on-line conversation, agree the goals and timetable for its work, and consider the next steps.

II. GOALS OF THE TASK TEAM

5. The Task Team agreed on the following goals:

- a. Prepare a succinct list of the core values of official statistics;
- b. Map the core values to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (and possibly to regional codes of practice, the Generic Law for Official Statistics and international quality frameworks);
- c. Define and describe the behaviours that demonstrate the application of the core values in practice.

III. TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

6. The Task Team proposes the following tentative timetable:

- a. July-September 2021: On-line conversation, across the international official statistics community, on what might be included in the list of core values - **COMPLETED**
- b. September 2021: The Task Team reviews the ideas generated, starts the process to develop a draft list of core values, and prepares proposals for next steps to be submitted to the CES Bureau - **COMPLETED**
- c. 13-14 October 2021: The CES Bureau is invited to discuss the proposals and progress so far, and provide feedback to the Task Team;
- d. November 2021-January 2022: The Task Team finalises the list of core values, maps them to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and prepares proposals for work on defining and describing the behaviours that demonstrate the application of the core values in practice;
- e. February 2022: The CES Bureau is invited to review the list and mapping, and the proposals for work on behaviours;
- f. March-April 2022: Written consultation with all CES members;

- g. June 2022: Subject to positive outcome of the consultation with CES members, the CES plenary session will be invited to endorse the list of core values and the mapping, as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations for the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;
- h. 2022-2023: The Task Team defines the behaviours that demonstrate the application of the core values in practice, and prepares a document to describe them;
- i. June 2023: The CES plenary session will be invited to endorse the behaviours document, subject to positive outcome of the consultation with CES members.

IV. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

- 7. The Task Team agreed the following underlying principles to guide its work:
 - a. The core values are those of the international official statistics community as a whole, i.e. those common values that informed the development of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, various codes of practice, the Generic Law on Official Statistics, quality frameworks and other norms, and which should also inform our response to new challenges (e.g. COVID-19, and new roles related to cross-government data management and use);
 - b. The core values can be considered as those words and phrases that we would like to hear when the users of official statistics are talking about the official statistics community;
 - c. The core values will need to be translated into many languages, so the terminology should be as simple and clear as possible;
 - d. Core values may be principles, but not all existing principles are values;
 - e. The list of core values is just the starting point. The definition of behaviours that demonstrate the application of the core values in practice will be at least as important for the official statistics community;
 - f. The list should be short and simple, maybe 8-10 items, and should avoid the inclusion of synonyms;
 - g. The work should not “reinvent the wheel”. In addition to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, other materials that could provide inspiration include the ISI Declaration on Professional Ethics and the European Statistical System Code of Practice;
 - h. The outputs of the Task Team should take into account the importance of the core values as a communication tool, both within the official statistics community (especially for new staff), and with the user community.

V. NEXT STEPS

8. The Task Team proposes to continue its work to elaborate the list of core principles in line with the underlying principles above. As a first step, Ireland and the UNECE Secretariat will produce and circulate a first draft list. This list will be in the format of the example below, identifying the core value and providing a short description which will highlight other values that may be synonyms or overlapping in some way:

Core Value: "**Trustworthy**".

Description: We are **transparent** and **honest**. We comply with the highest international standards and **deliver high quality products and services** in an **ethical manner**.

9. The Task Team will provide comments and the list will pass through successive iterations until agreement is reached. The list will be presented to the Bureau for endorsement before being circulated for written comments to all CES members.

VI. ACTION REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

10. The Bureau is invited to discuss the progress so far, including the goals, timetable, underlying principles and next steps presented above, provide feedback and advice to the Task Team and decide on the future direction of this work.