



Economic Commission for Europe**Conference of European Statisticians****Seventieth plenary session**

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Strategic directions in official statistics and in geospatial work**Strategic directions of the work of the Conference of
European Statisticians****Prepared by the Secretariat***Summary*

This paper presents the strategic directions of the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), its Bureau and subsidiary groups, as in June 2022. It is prepared by the Chair of CES (Padraig Dalton, Ireland) and the Secretariat. It draws on discussions in the CES Bureau in 2021 and 2022 as well as the programme of work of the secretariat and lists of topics identified for future discussions.

It is a contribution to the session on “Strategic Directions in official Statistics and Geospatial Work” at the Joint Plenary Session of the CES and UN-GGIM: Europe. The Joint Plenary Session is invited to discuss the contents of this paper and the equivalent one from the geospatial community (ECE/CES/2022/18 - Strategy of the Europe Regional Committee of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management), and identify areas where the two strategies converge. The aim of this discussion is to identify common areas where the statistical and geospatial communities can work together in the coming years.



I. Introduction

1. The area of official statistics is evolving rapidly, with the pace of change increasing in recent years due to a combination of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 round of population censuses. There is change in all areas of statistical production, from the underlying legal frameworks and organisational structures to the use of new data sources, the modernisation and standardisation of tools and methods, and the development of new dissemination and communication approaches.

2. With all this change, the need for a strategic framework to help guide official statisticians as they try to navigate conflicting demands and priorities, is greater than ever. This paper sets out the areas that the Conference and its Bureau have identified as strategic priorities. It takes inspiration from:

- The Report of the 69th plenary session of the Conference (June 2021) (ECE/CES/101)
- The reports of the CES Bureau meetings in October 2021 and February 2022 (ECE/CES/2022/14/Add.5 and ECE/CES/2022/14/Add.12)
- The CES Statistical Programme for 2022 (ECE/CES/2022/15)
- The Draft Programme of Work of the UNECE Statistics Subprogramme for 2023 (ECE/CES/2022/16)
- The Work Plan of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics for 2022 (ECE/CES/2022/12/Add.1)

II. Strategic directions

3. The strategic directions of the work of the Conference of European Statisticians can be divided into two broad areas, those that are cross-cutting in nature, and those that are related to the development of individual statistical subject-matter domains.

A. Cross-cutting areas

4. **Principles, values and ethics.** As CES celebrates 30 years of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, it also recognises the need to apply them in a consistent way to meet the many new challenges facing the statistical community. Whilst confirming that the Fundamental Principles provide a sound foundation for statistical work, CES recognises that more guidance is needed for both producers and users, to explain what sets official statistics apart from other data sources. In this respect, CES has initiated work to define the core values of official statistics and the behaviours that demonstrate how the Fundamental Principles and core values are implemented in practice. Further work is also planned on the links to the field of data ethics, including in the context of exploring the concept of a “social license”.

5. **Innovation and modernisation.** This includes the need to sustain innovations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as new ways of working. It also includes many of the activities that come under the remit of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics, for example, exploration of new areas such as machine learning, data science and data governance. CES sees it as a strategic priority to continue efforts in this area, and to identify new opportunities to innovate and modernise official statistics work.

6. **New data sources.** Integration of data from multiple and diverse sources is becoming increasingly important for the production of official statistics. CES recognises the importance of continuing to develop access to, and use of, administrative data, particularly in the context of the move towards register-based censuses across the UNECE region. At the same time, the increasing awareness of the opportunities presented by the integration of statistical and geospatial data is driving the strengthening of partnerships with the geospatial community, and the development of new types of geo-statistical outputs. Finally, the possibilities offered

by new types of private data sources need to be further explored. CES and its Bureau will continue to identify new needs and opportunities regarding new data sources.

7. **Legislation.** As the statistical community faces great changes, the underpinning statistical legislation can either be a hindrance or an enabler. The CES recognises that the exchange of ideas and good practices is necessary to ensure that developments in official statistics are facilitated by sound and forward-looking legislation. The new CES Steering Group on Modernising Statistical Legislation will support countries as they face these challenges.

8. **Sustainable Development Goals.** As we get closer to the deadline for SDGs in 2030, the need for data to assess progress will become more acute. This will impact on many areas of statistics, and will also require many national statistical offices to step-up their activities in coordinating national data, in line with their evolving data stewardship role. CES will continue to support countries in their endeavours through its Roadmap for SDG Statistics and its regular expert meetings and workshops.

9. **Communication and capacity development.** As national statistical offices face unprecedented pressures to develop in new directions, the importance of communication and exchange of ideas and experiences cannot be over-stated. Sharing ideas and solutions to common problems is much more efficient than each country trying to tackle these problems on their own. CES will continue to provide platforms to support effective communication on new challenges, as well as to ensure the flow of information reaches all members. This will facilitate the development of capacities in all countries and organisations, but particularly in those with less developed statistical systems.

B. Statistical subject-matter domains

10. **Environment and climate change.** This is one of the fastest growing areas of official statistics, spurred on by the large number of indicators required to measure and monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. CES will continue to develop tools to support coherent and comparable statistics on climate change, the development of the circular economy, and related areas such as measuring the impact of hazardous events and disasters

11. **Economy.** A major challenge for official statisticians in the coming years will be the implementation of the new version of the System of National Accounts, which is currently under development. In parallel, there are the growing challenges of measuring globalisation, digitalisation, well-being and the informal economy. CES will support its members in this area through the provision of guidance and by organising expert forums and capacity development activities.

12. **Population.** As the 2020 round of population and housing censuses draws to a close, preparations for the 2030 round are getting underway. The 2030 round is likely to see an unprecedented use of administrative registers, as well as moves towards on-line data collection. The focus on annual population estimates and in particular the need to further develop migration statistics is also an area for attention. The importance of geographical data as a means to link different sources will increase. CES will continue to be at the forefront of the global statistical community in providing support and guidance as countries adapt to these new ways of working.

13. **Society.** There is increasing policy interest across the UNECE region in ensuring inclusiveness of all sub-groups of society. CES will continue to work on topics related to social inclusion, including multi-dimensional poverty measurement and identifying hard-to-reach groups.