

7th Expert Meeting on Statistics for SDGs

12 - 13 April 2023, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Session 1: Steering Group and related groups on SDGs – progress updates

Revision of the country progress table and summary of questionnaire responses

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Introduction

1. The Steering Group for Statistics on SDGs published, in 2022, the [second edition of the Road Map on Statistics for SDGs](#). The Road Map 2.0 includes a series of recommendations, based on the first edition of the Road Map, and partially revised for the second edition.

2. To track the progress of countries in implementing the recommendations, the Secretariat created a table 'Summary of Progress in UNECE countries' on the [UNECE Knowledge Hub on SDGs](#). There have been several rounds of updating the table, but most updates date from 2019-2020. After the revision of the Road Map, the Steering Group decided to revise that table to reflect current priorities, and request countries to update the information on the table using an annual questionnaire. The table is available [here](#).

3. The table informs about availability of different SDG related items for the country and provides direct links (if available). The columns in the revised table are:

- National Road Map on Statistics for SDGs
- National web platform for data on SDGs
- Set of national SDG indicators
- Whether the NSO is the coordinator of the National Statistical System
- Using non-traditional data sources to produce SDG indicators

4. A questionnaire was sent out in March 2023. In addition to the information for updating the table, the questionnaire also asked for some other information that can be used in the work of the Steering Group:

- Whether countries have used SDMX to transfer data to the UNSD SDG data lab
- The role of the NSO in the country's last Voluntary National Review
- The number of global indicators produced by countries (this information has been also analyzed in relation to the number of indicators available in the ECE SDG database.¹)

¹ The final analysis will be done with the data from the global database as some questionnaire respondents are from outside the ECE region.

Results of the questionnaire

5. Of the 63 countries that were asked to respond to the questionnaire, 50 responded as of 4 April 2023.

6. Of the responding countries, the large majority (“Yes”: 44, “No”: 5) – **88 percent** – has indicated that their country has a **web platform for statistics on SDGs** such as a National Reporting Platform.

7. **Eighty percent of countries** who responded to the questionnaire **have a set of national indicators for SDGs** (“Yes”: 40, “No”: 10). National indicators are essential to measuring SDGs at the national level (as discussed in Chapter 5.3 of the Road Map 2.0), as the IAEG-SDG global monitoring framework was designed to measure progress towards the SDGs at the global level, often putting aside country-specific contexts. Tracking indicators based on country-specific challenges and priorities can enable different actors to contribute efficiently towards the SDGs.

8. Approximately **half of responding countries** reported that they have a **national road map/an action plan for Statistics for SDGs** (“Yes”: 23, “No”: 24, “Pending”: 3). A national road map could include a national indicator framework as described above, and a plan for communicating with users, and should be based on the country-specific needs and available resources (as outlined in recommendation C of chapter 5 of the Road Map 2.0).

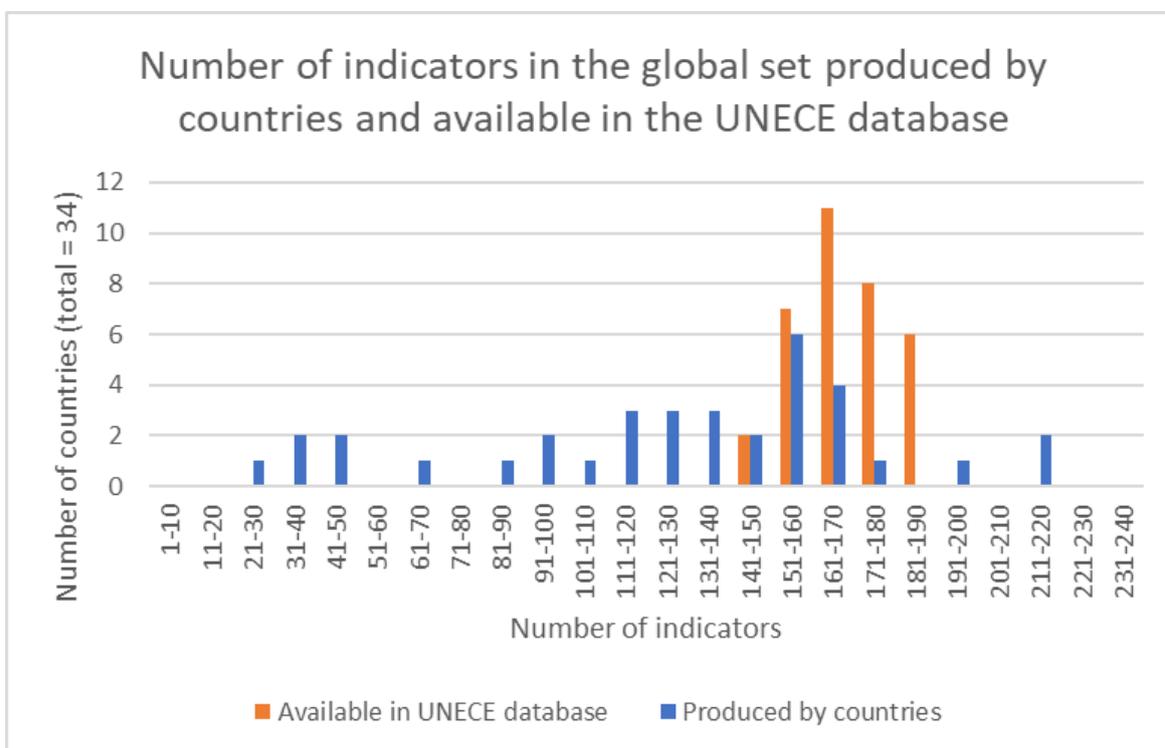
9. UN General Assembly resolution [A/RES/71/313](#) on the work of the statistical commission pertaining to the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development stresses, in paragraph 6, the role of National Statistical Offices as the coordinator of the National Statistical System. **In most cases, the National Statistical Office is coordinating the National Statistical System for SDG statistics** (“Yes”: 40, “Partially”: 7, “No”: 3). Countries that provided explanations accompanying their “Partially” response clarify that these responsibilities are established. Unfortunately, no additional information is provided by countries that responded “No” to this question.

10. The Road Map also made recommendations to improve statistical capacity (chapter 9). This includes capacity development in parallel or even ahead of the dynamically changing approaches to the production of statistical data, including the incorporation of the use of administrative data and the integration of other sources, including big data. **Almost half of all the responding countries are using non-traditional data sources** (for the purposes of the survey, these are all data sources except censuses, surveys and registers) in the production of SDG indicators (“Yes”: 24, “No”: 26). Countries are using various administrative data sources, scanner and credit card data, geospatial data (such as earth observation data), and even citizen science data to monitor a variety of SDG indicators. The use of non-traditional data is most prevalent (explicitly mentioned by 11 countries) for indicators under Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities. Indicators such as *11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate*, or *11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all*, benefit greatly from the use of geospatial data.

11. The Road Map 2.0 recommends exploring data transmission standards and automation tools with proven SDG application, to validate data posted in the Global SDG Indicators Database and upload country data to the SDG Data Lab, especially when country data differs from those in the global database (custodian agency data). Session 2 of the 7th Expert Meeting on Statistics for

SDGs will explore the need for a UNECE pilot project to compare custodian agency and country data. In preparation for this meeting and the potential project, a question has been included on whether countries **have previously uploaded national SDG data to the data lab**. **Ten of the 50 responding countries** (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, and United Kingdom) indicated that they did.

12. As of April 2023, almost all countries have undertaken a voluntary national review (VNR). The Secretary General’s reporting guidelines for VNRs at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the Handbook for the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs provide recommendations and help countries to prepare VNRs. A statistical annex is one of the proposed but non-compulsory elements of the report. The Road Map 2.0 recommends that NSOs promote the use of official statistics in VNRs and cooperate with the institution responsible for VNRs in the country. This will not only ensure consistency between the VNR and the statistical annex but strengthen the position of statistics as a means of communication of the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and build awareness among policy makers on the advantages of official statistics. The questionnaire includes an open question on the involvement of NSOs in the last VNR of their country. **The involvement of NSOs in the VNR varies and ranges from being contacted at the final stage of the VNR for statistical information, over NSOs providing substantive contributions to the main body of the report**, in addition to statistical annexes, to collaborating with the responsible agency from the conceptual phase to the presentation of the results at the HLPF.



13. A last question requested countries to provide the **number of indicators in the global set that their country is producing**. The questionnaire distinguished between indicators that are produced in full compliance and partial compliance with the global indicator framework. An indicator was considered partially compliant if there was a small deviation in the methodology or if a proxy indicator was used. A total of 35 countries provided a response. **On average, countries**

produced 128 indicators of the global set – an average of 97 were produced in full compliance with the global indicator framework.

14. Contrasting, the average number of indicators available in the UNECE database is 168² if we look at the same subset of countries (excluding one for which no data is available in the UNECE database). Comparing the distributions (see figure above) also reveals much smaller differences between countries in the UNECE database. This indicates that custodian agencies are able to publish indicators on countries largely independently of whether the countries produce the indicator themselves.

15. We thank all respondents for their cooperation in filling out the questionnaire.

² An indicator is counted if there is data for at least one series since 2016.