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## Economic Commission for Europe

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**Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella  
of the Conference: Data stewardship**

## Data stewardship

### Addendum

**Results of the consultation on the report *Data stewardship and the role  
of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem***

**Prepared by the Secretariat**

#### *Summary*

This document summarizes the comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem* (ECE/CES/2023/2). The Secretariat carried out a consultation in April – May 2023.

Thirty-eight responses to the consultation were received. All respondents agreed to endorse the document subject to incorporation of the comments made during this consultation. This note summarizes the comments and suggestions for amendments received, and the Task Force's reactions.

In view of the strong support, the Conference is invited to endorse the document *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem*, (ECE/CES/2023/2), subject to amendments presented in the current note (ECE/CES/2023/2/Add.1).



## I. Introduction

1. The current note summarizes comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem*.
2. The document was prepared by a CES Task Team chaired by Estonia. A preliminary draft of it was consulted with all CES members in spring 2022, and the resulting comments and suggestions were taken into account in finalising the document. The CES Bureau reviewed progress in February 2023 and requested the Secretariat to send the final draft to all CES members for consultation. The consultation was carried out in April–May 2023.
3. The following thirty-seven countries and one international organization provided responses to the consultation: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and WHO.
4. The general comments are summarised in section II. The comments on future work and provided in section III, and more detailed suggestions together with the Task Force’s response are summarized in section and IV.
5. The countries comments included much more detail than can be reflected in the current summary. These comments are retained by the Secretariat and they will provide a valuable input for further work on data stewardship, as proposed in Section 1.4 of the Report. The feedback provided also editorial and formatting comments. These will be taken into account in finalising the document for print but are not listed here.

## II. General comments

6. All responding countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the document. There were many positive comments about the material, for example:

**Austria:** The document is very clear and comprehensive. It inspires NSOs to reflect on their role.

**Finland:** The document is ready to be endorsed and really needed as it is first of its kind.

**France:** The document successfully reflects in a detailed and comprehensive manner the different aspects of data stewardship. It provides a balanced view of risks and opportunities for NSOs. It is an essential guide for NSOs in strategizing their position within the national data chain while preserving their core statistical mission and values.

**North Macedonia:** The document is well structured and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem is elaborated from different aspects.

**Slovakia:** The endorsement of this document by CES would be an important step towards enhancing data stewardship practices and ensuring the NSOs continue to play a vital role in the new data ecosystem.

**Türkiye:** It is a pioneering effort to streamline data management and data governance. With the development and progress of technology, the need for data stewardship is crucial both today and in the future.

7. All responding countries considered the report useful and marked that it has improved their understanding of data stewardship and NSOs role in it. Many responding countries expressed strong appreciation for the work of the Task Force in this important area. For example:

**France:** We would like to express our appreciation and support for the work accomplished by the CES Task Force, and acknowledge its efforts in incorporating

feedback on the preliminary draft and keeping the document up to date with the latest developments.

**Hungary:** This document is a cornerstone in the recent common efforts concerning the understanding of data stewardship and the search for the NSOs future role in the data economy. It is exceptional in having created a first compendium of knowledge about definitions, organisational setups, competencies related to data stewardship, and will be a most useful guide for the NSOs as well as a good basis for the communication with external stakeholders.

**Lithuania:** We highly appreciate the Task Force's work on the development of the well-structured and exhaustive document, giving guidance for the NSOs which are reconsidering their role in the new global environment.

**Poland:** The document is useful. It captures well the aspects emphasising the importance of sustainable data management within a country's data ecosystem. For data users it provides a better understanding of the work of NSOs and the entire data systems.

**Spain:** The report is really comprehensive, congratulations to Task Force members.

### III. Comments on future work

8. Section 1.4 of the Report summarises possible next steps in future work on data stewardship under CES. In the consultation, twenty-nine countries provided their priorities for future work, including additional ideas that were not mentioned in the Report. Twenty-seven countries would be interested in participating in future work on this topic (and possibly an additional seven countries who replied 'maybe' to this question).

9. From the list in Section 1.4 of the Report countries indicated the following as the highest priorities:

- (a) Provide more specific guidance, recommendations and tools for implementing data stewardship;
- (b) Provide a forum for exchange of experience in implementing data stewardship;
- (c) Identify a core set of responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards in national data ecosystems;
- (d) Compile a knowledge base of best practices and examples of successful data stewardship implementation, including more detailed examples of how data stewardship is implemented, and the data services provided in practice.

10. Many countries asked for more specific guidance and/or recommendations and tools for implementing data stewardship, including identifying what kind of tools are needed, in view of the variety of contexts in countries (**Chile, Ecuador, Slovakia**). Specifically mentioned were tools for supporting the implementation of data stewardship in quality assurance (e.g. quality frameworks for administrative registers, privately held data), and methods, tools and capabilities (standards and classifications, metadata catalogue, etc.) (**Italy**). **New Zealand** noted that data stewardship is very specific to country context and guidance is needed that takes into account each country's customs, laws, practices and social license.

11. There was a call for developing position profiles/job descriptions for data stewardship roles (Chief Data Officer, Chief Information Officer, Data Steward, Domain Steward, etc.) and discussion of how these roles work together (**Canada**). **Mexico** noted that they have developed a data governance model, and the role and responsibilities of data stewards.

12. It was noted that currently there is a lack of relevant skills and shortage of staff, and an action plan to acquire these skills is needed (**North Macedonia, Romania**). Some countries also asked for relevant training (**Costa Rica**).

13. Several countries asked for further work on communication of data stewardship, e.g. developing a joint communication strategy (**Austria, Switzerland**). This was linked to

developing strategies to promote the data stewardship as a co-ordinated effort in a country (**Chile**).

14. Other aspects of data stewardship worth considering in more detail mentioned were:

- Relation between data stewardship and administrative records (**Chile**);
- Clarifying ethical guidelines for providing data-related services to the rest of the society (especially acquisition, merging and provision of micro-data for research and knowledge-based management systems) (**Finland, Slovakia**);
- synopsis of the barriers countries experience or perceive as barriers to stepping into the data stewardship role (**Ireland**);
- a periodic survey or reviews of how NSOs in different countries are pursuing their role as data stewards (**Austria, Italy, Lithuania, North Macedonia**).

15. Countries also emphasised the need for good coordination with similar initiatives across the UN system, as well as in other international fora (**Mexico, Chile**). Clear information about the potential next steps was considered important as there are many initiatives around data governance and stewardship (**Türkiye**).

16. The need to maintain the **glossary** was highlighted by several countries (**Canada, Norway, Switzerland**). **Mexico** offered to translate the key terms into Spanish.

#### **Reaction by the Task Force:**

17. The Task Force proposes to extend the list of possible future work items in section 1.4 of the report, while trying to avoid increasing the length of the document. Suggested themes for future work:

- Challenges/barriers and opportunities.
- Practical examples/country case studies and/or comparative analyses.
  - Examples of data stewardship and governance frameworks, implementation activities, data literacy promotion, etc.
- Data governance operating models (incl. managing different data sources e.g., admin data and privately held data).
- Data stewardship related guiding principles, frameworks, policy instrument examples and other supporting materials.
  - Can include those related to data governance, data ethics, data strategy, administrative data, data quality etc.
- Methodologies and tools (can include technologies or not), such as those related to
  - Data literacy, data sharing, privacy and confidentiality, guides for communication with stakeholders, other tools related to DS implementation and measurement, etc.
- Role of NSO Chief Data Officer (CDO) versus other kinds of CDOs, and/or the role of a CDO vs. Data Steward, how they interact/intersect, etc.
- Partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders (incl. communication), exploring the public-private-academic sector relationships that can be leveraged.
- Data stewardship and Artificial Intelligence (AI) / Machine Learning (ML), engaging more with Big Data.

18. A recommendation will also be included that smaller, more focused groups would be in a better position to review these questions, as they can:

- (a) deep-dive into the issues/themes that received calls for more nuanced/granular analysis and specific/concrete guidance, and
- (b) better address the contextual particularities that a broader report will not be able to, while remaining representative.

19. Concerning the glossary, the document will include a stronger statement that the glossary remains evergreen and was developed with best knowledge at hand. The glossary will be available as a stand-alone document. Data stewardship and related definitions may require adjustment over time. This remains a subject for real-life testing and further fine tuning, if necessary, which can occur with the evergreening of the glossary.

## IV. Suggestions for changes to the document and responses by the Task Force

### A. Executive summary

20. Many countries (e.g., **Austria, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Slovakia**) indicated that the Executive summary is very clear and is a good reflection of the document.

21. The following changes to the executive summary were suggested:

- **Chile** suggested that the importance of multi-party effort for system-wide data stewardship should be emphasized more strongly to promote data stewardship as a national priority.
- **Spain** suggested to add to the key messages the need to perform NSO tasks in accordance with the law.
- **United States** recommended that the concept of data protection and safeguarding should be noted in the Executive Summary.

#### Response by the Task Force:

22. The Task Force agrees that the aspect of data protection is critical and warrants mentioning it in the executive summary. Other changes should be avoided to ensure the brevity of the executive summary. The need for a multi-party effort is noted in the key messages. The legal and regulatory environment is covered in Section 2.4 of the report.

### B. Main body of the report

23. The majority of respondents considered the definition of data stewardship good. Some comments included: making data protection part of the definition (**United States**); presenting the definition at an earlier place in the main text of the report (the **Netherlands**); focusing the definition on the part of data stewardship that goes beyond data management (**Norway**). **Slovakia** commented that the definitions of data stewardship and data governance may be confusing to some readers.

24. There were differing opinions to which extent NSOs can take on a data stewardship role for the public sector. Some asked for a stronger statement regarding the leading role of NSOs in the process of emerging data governance and data stewardship (**Italy, United Kingdom**). Others called for caution in extending the role of NSOs (**Norway, United States**), especially concerning statistical confidentiality and independence from government. **Norway** noted that these risks are shown clearly in Annex 2. **Romania** expressed concerns about the capacity in NSOs for data stewardship, and **Malta** noted that the IT role in data management may be challenged by other national authorities for data infrastructure and management across the public sector.

25. Many countries suggested to include more country examples in the main body of the text. Some countries (**Austria, Romania, Slovakia**) suggested adding examples to chapter 4 on how different data governance models are implemented by countries and organizations, and further elaboration of potential challenges and each model in the context of data stewardship.

26. Several countries requested to highlight and add details to individual aspects of the text (e.g. on the dependencies between technologies and data governance and the role of AI

(**Italy**); link between administrative data and data stewardship, use of hybrid model (**Chile**); data literacy and data use, challenges and opportunities (**Slovakia**), social license (**Netherlands**), etc.). At the same time, there were suggestions to shorten some sections (**Austria, Romania**).

27. Several countries asked for developing guidance or frameworks, e.g. a framework for data ethics and how to implement effective data stewardship practices (**Slovakia**); using maturity models, and how to acquire the knowledge and skills for the roles and responsibilities for data stewardship described in section 5 (**Romania, North Macedonia**).

28. Some countries suggested clearer definitions and differentiation of roles mentioned in section 5 (**Costa Rica, Netherlands, Slovakia**).

29. There were some specific comments on the maturity model described in chapter 6: NSO may not aim for a role as national data steward in all countries, for example, when that role is assigned to another public authority (**Norway, Slovakia**), the maturity model may be perceived as overly complex (**Slovakia**), and that it is unlikely that the data steward role may become unnecessary at any point (the **Netherlands**).

30. The request for further guidance was also prevalent for chapter 7 on communication. Several countries (**Italy, Romania, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Switzerland**) suggested providing more concrete guidance, for example communication strategies for different external stakeholders.

31. The box on Covid impact in chapter 1 was considered outdated (**Romania**).

32. Some countries asked for clarifying the use of certain terms in the document (e.g. social acceptance/social license (**Chile**), data/statistics (**Norway**)).

#### **Response by the Task Force:**

33. The Task Force discussed the definitions of data stewardship and data governance in its work at length, and proposes not to make any changes to the definition for data stewardship in this Report. The group agrees, however, that the definition may be updated, if necessary, as part of future updates to the glossary.

34. Concerning the extent of the role of data stewardship beyond NSS that could be taken on by NSOs, the Task Force had quite an extensive internal discussion. It was decided to formulate in the key messages that "NSOs have inherent and unique expertise to lead data stewardship in the NSS and to take on data stewardship responsibilities across the national data ecosystem". Due to the different situations in countries and the contextual nature of data stewardship implementation, a balanced formulation was necessary to reflect that the extent of this role needs to be considered on a country-by-country basis. Therefore, the Task Force proposes not to make a stronger overall recommendation valid for all countries.

35. The report, brief and executive summary will emphasise further that the risks and pitfalls related to data stewardship implementation and official statistics production (including safeguarding professional independence and statistical confidentiality) need to be kept in mind specifically when engaging with the stewardship tasks outside official statistics.

36. The Task Force will consider moving some examples from the Annex to the main body of the report, taking into account the overall length of the document.

37. A statement on roles and responsibilities (e.g., data steward, data manager, data custodian) will be added to Section 5, clarifying that they are not an exact science, and that each organization may define them differently. The importance that organizations clearly communicate with partners and collaborators how they have defined these terms will be highlighted.

38. It will be noted in the text that the maturity model as suggested in the report may not fit to every administrative and/or legal system and country specific adjustments may be necessary.

39. The information on the COVID response will be moved to chapter 2 to highlight how NSOs have adapted to the changing environment.

40. As requested, the use of terms ‘social acceptance’ and ‘social license,’ ‘data’ and ‘statistics’ throughout the document will be better clarified. The Task Force will review the document and add a reference to statistics in addition to data where necessary.

41. The feedback from electronic consultation included some issues and challenges raised by countries which are outside the scope of the Terms of Reference of the current Task Force but could be taken up in future work. This concerns to a large extent asking for more detail, examples and guidance on specific issues (there were such remarks on practically all chapters). The Task Force was focusing on the tasks in its Terms of Reference, and had to balance the level of detail with the available time and the length of the document. Adding additional detail and emphasis on the specific topics should therefore be avoided beyond what the Task Force proposed above.

## C. Annexes

42. There were requests to keep the glossary periodically updated (**Canada, Switzerland**). The glossary entries could be further streamlined to reduce redundancies as some definitions are based on different sources.

43. **Norway** also noted that Annex 3 considers useful supporting principles of data stewardship, but it is not clear which of these are relevant for official statistics.

### Response by the Task Force:

44. The glossary included in this report should remain evergreen and periodically updated, continuing the collaboration with other international initiatives where feasible. A relevant statement will be added to the description of the glossary.

## D. Addendum 1: Brief

45. Many countries (**Canada, France, Malta, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Switzerland**) praised the usefulness and clarity of the brief. **Norway** indicated that the risks discussed in the brief should be highlighted. **Austria** noted that the brief may not be fully understandable without having read the main document.

### Response by the Task Force:

46. As indicated in the reaction to the comments on the main body of the report, the risks of taking on a system-wide data stewardship role should also be more strongly emphasized in the brief. The Task Force will ensure that the message that implementation of data stewardship depends on country context is clear in the brief as well.

## E. Addendum 2: Country examples

47. **Belarus, Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Serbia** and **Switzerland** provided additional country examples, or updates to their earlier examples. **Chile** suggested that more country examples should be added.

48. **Austria** and **Slovakia** indicated that a comparison of countries could be included. **Austria** suggested to use an overview table for this comparison and that the length of country descriptions should be balanced. **Slovakia** also indicated that the country examples only show successes and do not provide information on challenges that NSOs face with this role and that there is a lack of detail in the country examples.

49. **North Macedonia** suggested that country examples should be updated periodically every two or three years.

### Response by the Task Force:

50. The country examples that have been provided through this consultation will be added to the set of country case studies.

51. The Task Force agrees that it would be valuable to periodically update the country examples, and to present them in a more harmonised way. This will be considered as part of future work.

#### **IV. Proposal to the Conference**

11. In view of the unanimous support received from countries in response to the consultation, the Conference is invited to endorse the report presented in document ECE/CES/2023/2, subject to the amendments following the written consultation as described above.

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