

How to reach the public with climate change-related statistics? Lessons learned from interviews with journalists in the UNECE region

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Abstract

Increasing public interest in a broad range of climate change-related issues, including emissions and mitigation / net zero policies, impacts on communities and the environment, the increasing need and benefit of adaptation and links with other topics such as the economy, health, transport and policy, brings new and emerging user groups of climate change-related statistics. Preferences of these user groups differ in terms of communication products, channels and data dissemination. The role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in informing the public about statistics and data relating to climate change ties in with the principles of Action for Climate Empowerment in the Paris Agreement and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

As part of the work of the UNECE Task Force on the role of national statistical offices in achieving national climate objectives, we have conducted structured interviews with journalists working on climate change-related issues from various media outlets across the UNECE region to understand how they work with various data sources, which statistics are most interesting for the public and what makes it easy or difficult for the journalists to use specific data sources. The results reveal that the public is interested in in-depth stories and insight-driven graphics on various climate change topics spanning environmental, social and economic issues. However, there are significant gaps in data availability, particularly on the impacts of climate change, its interactions with health, the economy and nature, and adaptation. There are also broader difficulties with the level of granularity and accessibility of data.

The presentation would cover lessons learned from the interviews and draft guidance on the role of NSOs in informing the public about climate change-related issues developed by the Task Force based on the interviews and country examples. The guidance covers dissemination and communication of climate change-related statistics, understanding user groups, actively reaching out to the public, using social media and other channels, working with machine searchability and coordination between statistical experts and communications staff within the NSO. The Expert Meeting participants will be invited to provide feedback and additional country examples.