



How to reach the public with climate change-related statistics?

Lessons learned from interviews with journalists in the UNECE region

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11-13 October 2023



- Background
- Characteristics of climate change-related statistics
- Why informing the public matters?
- Interviews with journalists
- How NSOs can contribute
- Recommendations and questions

UNECE work on climate change-related statistics



UNSC programme review on CC and official statistics

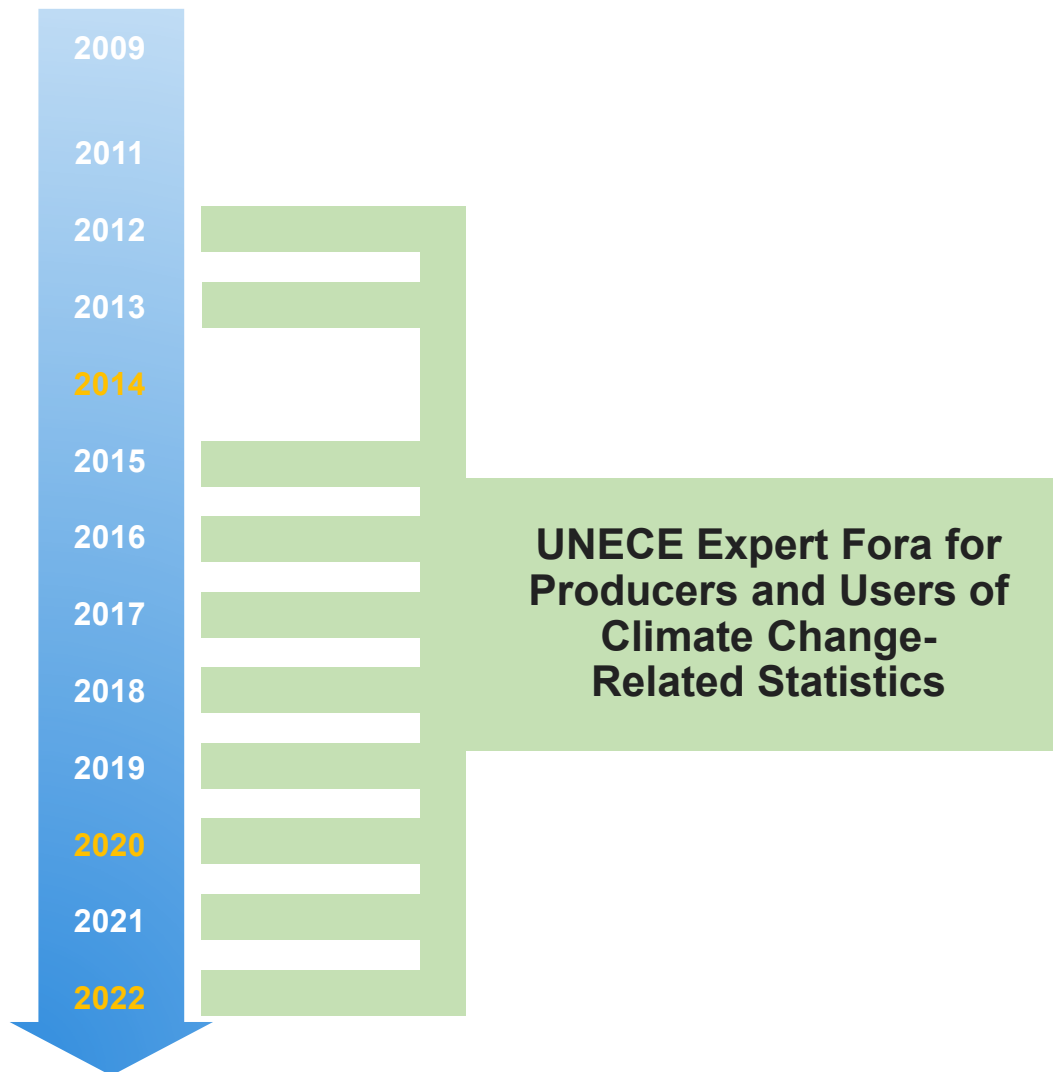
CES Task Force on climate change related-statistics

CES recommendations on CCRS

CES initial indicator set

CES refined set of indicators and an in-depth review

Task Force on the Role of NSOs in achieving national climate objectives



Task Force on the role of NSOs in achieving climate objectives

Objective

Develop guidance on **how NSOs can contribute to achieving national climate objectives** – identify **concrete ways** in which NSOs can be involved and **showcase what the statistical system already offers** to support climate action.

Mission

To inspire and support people working in NSOs who want to start or develop their work in this area.

Active Members (± 30)

- **National statistical offices:** Netherlands (Chair), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Türkiye, United Kingdom, Ukraine, ...
- **Ministry of Environment / GHG inventory:** Armenia, Belarus, Poland, Costa Rica ...
- **International organizations:** UNFCCC, UNSD, UNEP, UNECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ECA, IMF, IEA, EEA, Eurostat, OECD, PARIS21, ...

Organization of the Task Force's work



Timeline

- *Completed:*
 - **February 2022** – Task Force established by the CES Bureau
 - **September 2022** – presentation of the work plan and first findings from interviews with climate journalists to the 2022 Expert Forum
 - **August 2023** – presentation of the draft Guidance for consultation to the 2023 Expert Forum
 - October 2023 – presentation to other expert meetings
- *Planned:*
 - **January 2024** – submission of the final draft to the CES Bureau
 - **March-April 2024** – consultation with CES member countries and international organizations
 - **June 2024** – endorsement by the CES plenary session

Organization of work

- Parallel groups established to expedite the work on thematic chapters
- Most of the work carried out by e-mails and videoconferences
- Three in-person meetings

Content of the Guidance



1. Introduction
2. Institutional landscape and the role of NSOs
3. Reporting under the Paris Agreement
4. Meeting information needs of national policymaking on climate change mitigation
5. Meeting information needs of national policymaking on climate change adaptation
6. Data needed to support a just transition
7. **Informing the public**
8. Climate finance
9. Guidance on cross-cutting issues (coordination, engagement with policymakers, collaboration with researchers, use of geospatial data etc.)
10. Conclusions/recommendations and future work

Each chapter from 3 to 8 examines policy context and identify how NSOs can contribute

Chapters 1-5 and 7 largely completed. Work in progress on chapters 6, 8-10.

Draft Guidance presented to the Expert Forum is available [here](#)



Characteristics of climate change-related statistics

- Environmental, economic and social statistics relevant for climate change policies and analyses
- High policy relevance
- No strict boundary
- Complex institutional landscape – many stakeholders with strong mandates including other data providers
- Role of NSOs mostly not prescribed by international agreements
- Multiple approaches exist - territory-based vs. residence-based

Examples of actors by main stakeholder group



2 (1.5)-degrees goal, adaptation goal and finance goal

Policy goals (e.g. reduction of 55% in 2030)

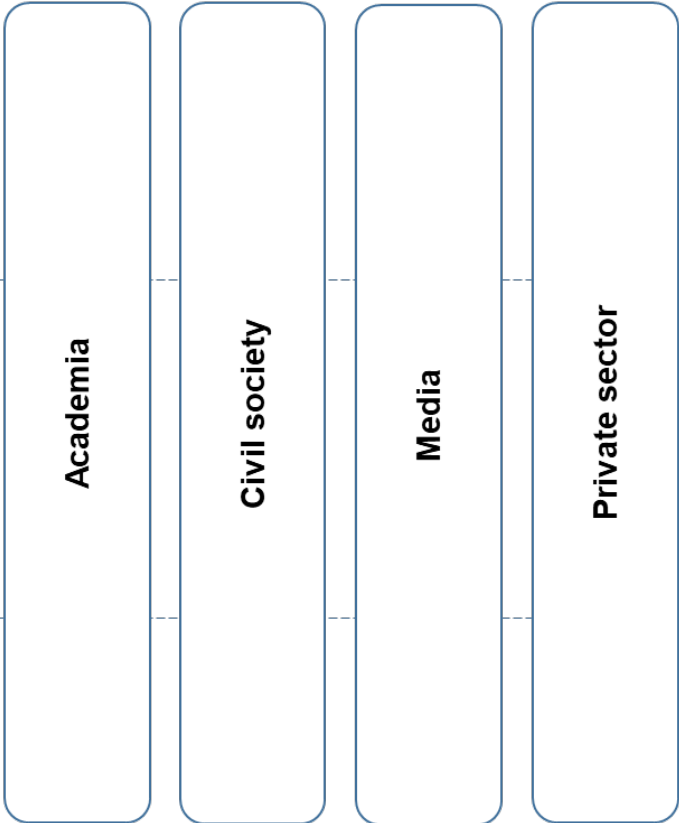
INTERNATIONAL



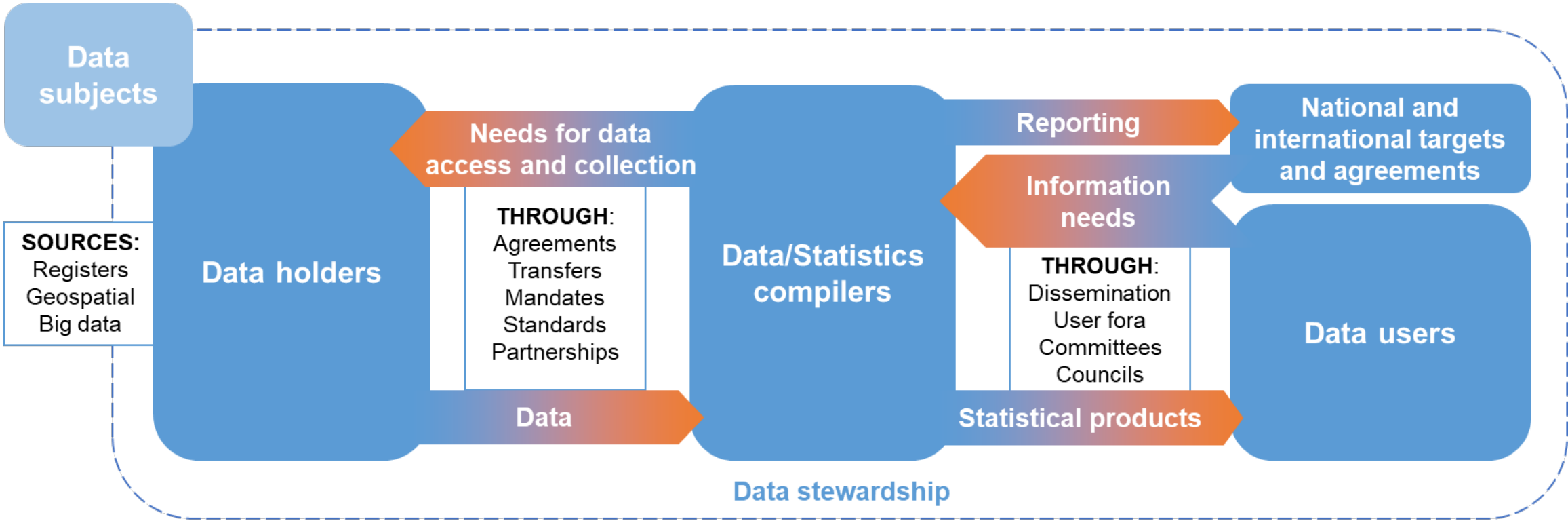
NATIONAL



LOCAL



Roles in producing statistics and data



Why informing the public matters



- Achieving climate goals involves all parts of society
- Action for Climate Empowerment in the Paris Agreement (art. 12)
 - Education
 - Training
 - Public awareness
 - Public access to information
 - Public participation
 - International cooperation
- Related to the core mandate of NSOs and Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Audiences and user needs for climate change-related statistics



	"The public"	General journalists , teachers, students, consultants	Climate journalists , ministries, agencies, NGOs, climate activists	Data journalists , researchers, experts, developers
	Generally interested	Specifically interested	Professionals and policymakers	Expert analysts
Overview content Interactive maps, infographics, graphs Key figures, dashboards Simple wording, engaging visuals and titles	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commented statistics Press releases, reports, analysis Thematic webpages	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Statistics Tables Documentation of statistics	No	No	Yes	Yes
Data, including microdata Tailored and detailed data Anonymized micro data Geospatially enabled data	No	No	No	Yes

Table 2. Needs for climate change-related statistics products by user group

Rationale and approach

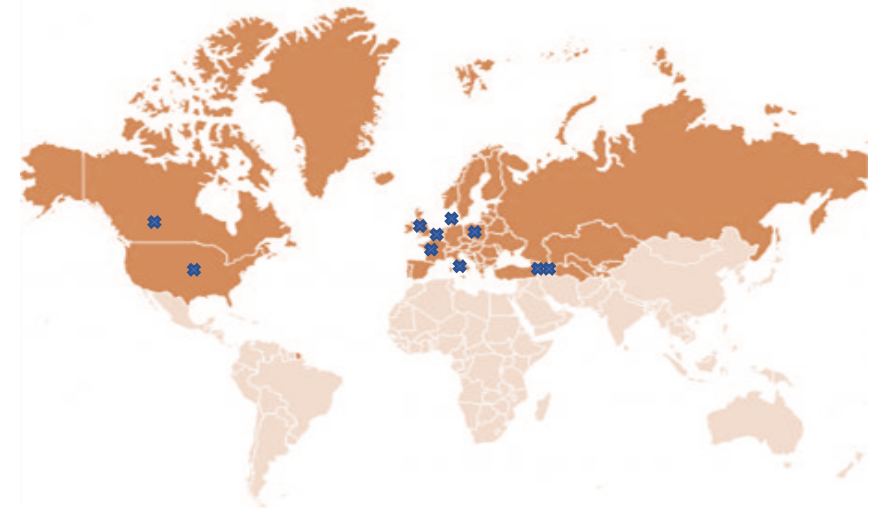


■ Why ask journalists?

- Public go to the media for information
- Journalists are a key group responsible for obtaining and disseminating information, data and statistics to the public
- Experts in current topics and ways to effectively reach their audience

■ Collecting experiences through **structured interviews**

- Conducted via phone in July – November 2022
- Prewritten questions with option to elaborate and give examples
- Coverage: Geography, type of media, journalists' technical skill
- 11 interviews



Climate related data of most interest to the public



- Wide range of stories and topics
 - “Traditional” story-focused narratives
 - Graphics, visualizations
 - Analyses
 - Specialized data or GIS analysis skills
 - Stories with data as an essential element



Data and sources most used by the journalists



- Climate data from different **sources** – NSOs, international organizations and other:
 - Hydro-meteorological institutes, Ministry of Environment/ Energy and other national government sources
 - Universities
 - Private actors, social media
- Physical **measures** – weather, emissions and energy are generally well available on national level
- Resources in **English** and easily **accessible** will be used more often
- Time, resources and technical skill dictate the **format** used:
 - Mostly raw data/tables (4)
 - Both data and graphs/press releases (3)
 - Mostly graphs and press releases (3)

Which data are difficult to access?



■ Topics:

- Climate adaptation, business and finance, impact of climate change on health and nature, consumer carbon footprint measures

■ Issues:

- **Coverage:** Lack of availability, particularly for parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America; different scales, geographies and lack of coherence
- **Insufficient timeliness:** Periodic (annual publications) are too old; up-to-minute data is missing
- **Granularity:** Local level data to inform local stories
- **Accessibility:** Open access to data; Ready-made visualizations and interpretations

Preferences and needs



- **Less technical** journalists' needs
 - Help desks and direct contact
 - Fewer reference values and periods are preferred
 - Fact sheets and dashboards with most relevant data
 - Pre-releases under embargo
- **More technical** journalists' needs
 - Geospatial data in usable formats (shape files, JSON, vector format etc.)
 - Free and open-source raw data
- **Too little** data is not good, but **too much** is not good either
- Attractive format helps to draw attention to what is available but big media will do their own visualizations anyway

Different approaches to measuring GHG emissions?



Yes, but...



- ... I cannot explain the details
- ... I will consult an expert if I need to explain the different approaches
- ... I am not confident enough to describe it in detail
- ... I have never researched the details
- ... I do not think it is important
- ... I feel it is fine as long as the approaches do not contradict
- ... I am not sure this has ever complicated a story narrative
- ... I always stick to one of the approaches
- ... I think the IPCC approach presents an incomplete picture

- It is **difficult** to be a climate journalist using data
- Data produced by NSOs are used and appreciated, but often **not the first thing** that comes to mind
- **Local and current** data are of most interest, but not exclusively
- **No data vs. too much data**
- What comes first – **data or the story?**
- Reliable data is very important but sometimes **pragmatism** wins
- Very useful exercise but difficult to carry out

Strengths and what could be done



■ Strengths:

- Producing statistics for public good
- Trusted data provider on a topic that can be highly politicized
- Expertise in making data available and accessible
- Broad perspective of the data landscape

■ What could be done - data:

- Emissions: data and user guidance
- Other climate-related topics of public interest: foreign climate-aid, climate-related health expenditure, waste management, low-carbon energy consumption, business analysis on micro level
- Collect and present relevant data from other agencies, e.g. energy statistics
- Granular data and geospatially-enabled data

Dissemination and communication



- **Static and interactive data presentations**
 - Statistical yearbooks, bulletins, articles, websites, portals, dashboards, social media, tables, graphics, mapping tools, downloadable files etc.
- **Proactive outreach, e.g., to schools**
- **Social media activities**
 - Infographics, videos or highlights on LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram
 - Dialog with users – can be resource costly
- **Searchability and machine-readability**
- Serving those who look for a **quick answer** – and those who want to know **(much) more**
- **Cooperation between communications and domain experts at the NSO**

Draft recommendations for NSOs



- Map and regularly evaluate **user needs**
- Improve **machine readability** and **searchability**
- Assist users with **thematic websites or dashboards** for statistics and indicators
 - Structure “drivers”-”emissions”-“impacts”-”mitigation”-”adaptation”
 - Increase relevance with international comparisons
- Provide **user guidance** on the different methods/approaches
 - Short format: key figures or short fact box
 - Long format: Technical note and documentation of statistics

Questions to the Expert Meeting



- What good practices and innovations in dissemination and communication could help with the identified issues?
- What examples of user engagement and mechanisms for following user needs could be given?
- Is it still a political topic and how to balance policy-relevance and impartiality?
- What do you think about the recommendations?
- Any other feedback and input are appreciated – in the Q&A or by e-mail (cwiek@un.org and srs@dst.dk)

Thank you!

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