

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of project E331 “Modernising Statistical Production Phase 3”

I. Purpose

The purpose of this internal evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNECE project E331 “Modernising Statistical Production Phase 3” were achieved. The evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project.

The evaluation will also assess any impacts the project may have had on progressing human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation will finally look at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess, to the extent possible, UNECE’s COVID-19 early response through this project.

II. Background

To monitor the 2030 development agenda and respond to the increasingly complex challenges in society, there is a pressing need for statistical organisations¹ to provide more disaggregated and timely data in a more accessible manner. Statistical organisations also face competition from private companies that produce their own data and attracts the attention of users, all while operating within existing budget constraints. The key to overcome these challenges is to modernise the management and production of official statistics, harness the potential of new data sources and adapt innovative technologies and methodologies.

In 2010, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)² decided to set up the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) to actively steer the modernisation of statistical organisations. The mission of the HLG-MOS is to work collaboratively to identify trends, threats, and opportunities in modernising statistical organisations and provide a common platform for experts to develop solutions in a flexible and agile way.

The annual work programme of the HLG-MOS consists of four Modernisation Groups, each working in cross-cutting pillars that are important for modernising statistical organisations such as human resource, standards. The work programme also contains two annual HLG-MOS projects on specific topics that are selected in a previous year, mostly on new and innovative technologies and ideas such as big data, machine learning and strategic communication.

The HLG-MOS meets annually to review the work programme, sets priorities for the coming years, and revise their mission and vision strategy where needed. The HLG-MOS Executive Board is tasked by the HLG-MOS to oversees the execution of the work programme, and provides guidance to Modernisation Groups and HLG-MOS projects throughout the year via its monthly meetings. Toward the end of year, Modernisation Groups and other experts in statistical organisation propose activities for the next year and the Executive Board prioritises and selects the proposals based the mission and vision, which is ultimately approved by the HLG-MOS by January next year.

The Modernising Statistical Production Phase 3 was set up to support the activities of the work programme decided by the HLG-MOS for the project period (July 2019 to December 2023³). The focus is on supporting the development of new models, frameworks, guidance and capabilities.

The project is about addressing the emerging needs of statistical organisations and develop solutions, therefore by its nature, it does not have detailed specific expected output and activities in advance. The project also does not consist of technical assistance or capacity building but focuses on supporting the

¹ Throughout the document, “statistical organisations” mean national and international statistical organisations that produce official statistics.

² The CES consists of the Chief Statisticians of more than 60 countries, it drives the work of the UNECE Statistics Division and advises it about statistical development needs of the countries.

³ Originally 2022 but extended due to Covid pandemic.

HLG-MOS work programme that brings together able and willing experts to share experiences and develop solutions that are shared in a broad official statistical community.

The following are some of the outcomes of Phase III:

- Machine Learning for Official Statistics (from HLG-MOS project 2019-2020)
- Input Privacy Preservation (from HLG-MOS project 2020-2022)
- Synthetic Data for Official Statistics (from HLG-MOS project 2021)
- The Role of Brand Management, Marketing and Crisis Communication for Statistical Organisations (from a Modernisation Group on Capability, 2022)
- Geospatial view of Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM; from a Modernisation Group on Standards, 2021)
- Linking GSBPM and Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) - Information Flow within GSBPM using GSIM (GSBPM; from a Modernisation Group on Standards, 2022)

III. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

The evaluation will be guided by the objectives, indicators of achievement and means of verification established in the logical framework of the project document. The evaluation will be conducted in Q3-Q4 of 2023. It will cover the full implementation of the project, from July 2019 to December 2023 in the CES countries.

The final evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:

- Determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project results in light of its goals and objectives;
- Assess how the project activities contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realisation of human rights, with an emphasis on 'leaving no one behind' and, if needed, it will make recommendations on how these considerations can be better addressed in future activities of the subprogramme.
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project and formulate action-oriented, forward-looking recommendations addressed to the subprogramme for improving future interventions.

The evaluation criteria are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Relevance

1. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities and needs of national statistical offices in beneficiary countries in modernising their statistical production?
2. To what extent were the project activities consistent with global and regional priorities and aligned with the SDGs?
3. How relevant were the project activities vis-à-vis the programme of work of the UNECE? What value has UNECE added in this area?
4. To what extent were gender, human rights, disability perspectives and climate change considerations integrated into the design and implementation of the project? How can these perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?

Effectiveness

5. To what extent were the project design and set-up effective for meeting the needs of statistical offices in beneficiary countries?
6. To what extent did the project achieve its objectives and expected results, namely to improve the competencies of statistical offices in the beneficiary countries to modernise their statistical production and to address the emerging issues identified by HLG-MOS in the field of official statistics?
7. To what extent are the project activities coherent and harmonised with those of other partners operating within the same context, particularly those of other UN system entities?
8. Which obstacles and difficulties did statistical offices face, if any, that prevented them from actively participating in the project?
9. What were the challenges/obstacles (including COVID-19) to achieving the expected results? How successfully did the project overcome these?

Efficiency

10. Were the resources adequate for achieving the results?
11. Were the results achieved on time and were all activities organised efficiently?
12. To what extent were the resources used economically and how could the use of resources be improved?

Sustainability

13. What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended and to what extent have these measures addressed the existing risks for sustainability?
14. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work? How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, or replicated?
15. To what extent project activities streamlined with countries projects and activities?

IV. Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with: the ECE Evaluation Policy⁴; the Administrative instruction guiding Evaluation in the UN Secretariat⁵; and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation⁶. Human rights and gender equality considerations will be integrated at all stages of the evaluation⁷: (i) in the evaluation scope and questions; (ii) in the methods, tools and data analysis techniques; (iii) in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final report. The evaluator will explicitly explain how human rights, gender, disability, SDGs, and climate change considerations will be taken into account during the evaluation.

The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings. The evaluator shall conduct online surveys and interview a wide range of diverse stakeholders from the public sector, academia, international organisations, and, where applicable, the diaspora and civil society. To ensure representativeness, the evaluator shall speak to a large sample of stakeholders including high-level government interlocutors whom UNECE has worked with.

The evaluation should be conducted based on the following mixed methods to triangulate information:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents, including the project document and information on project activities (monitoring data); materials developed in support of the activities (agendas, plans, participant lists, background documents, donor reports and publications); Proposed programme budgets covering the evaluation period; project reports to the donor.
2. Online survey of key stakeholders and beneficiaries: the survey will be developed by the consultant on her/his preferred platform.
3. Interviews (in-person and/or by telephone/video): the evaluator shall interview a wide range of diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries from the public sector, academia, international organisations, and, where applicable, the diaspora and civil society. To ensure representativeness, the evaluator shall speak to a large sample of stakeholders including high-level government interlocutors whom UNECE has worked with.
4. Remote observation of virtual workshops and meetings, including recordings of meetings if applicable.

The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report that will among others include the survey questions and interview guide. The evaluation report will be written in English, will consist of approximately 30 pages and will include an executive summary (max. 2 pages) describing the evaluation methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The evaluator will also produce an Evaluation Brief summarising key evaluation findings, lessons learned and recommendations, including through images and infographics.

⁴ [UNECE Evaluation policy](#)

⁵ ST/AI/2021/3

⁶ [UNEG 2016 Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#)

⁷ In line with UNEG Guidance contained in [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#)

V. Evaluation schedule⁸

August 2023	Terms of Reference finalised
September 2023	Evaluator selected
October 2023	Contract signed. Evaluator starts the desk review
Late October 2023	Evaluator submits inception report including survey design
November 2023	Launch of data gathering, including survey and interviews
December 2023	Evaluator submits draft evaluation report and evaluation brief
January 2024	Evaluator submits final evaluation report and evaluation brief

VI. Resources and management of the evaluation

An independent consultant will be engaged to conduct the evaluation under the management of the Programme Management Unit (PMU). Payment will be made upon satisfactory delivery of work. PMU will manage the evaluation and will be involved in the following steps: Selection of the evaluator; Preparation and clearance of the Terms of Reference; Provision of guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design and methodology; Clearance of the final report after quality assurance of the draft report. The Project Manager, in consultation with the Division Director, will be involved in the following steps: Provide all documentation needed for desk review, contact details, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation; Advise the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews; Process and manage the consultancy contract of the evaluator, along with the key milestones agreed with PMU.

VII. Intended use / Next steps

The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the UNECE Statistics Subprogramme. Findings of this evaluation will be used, when possible, to:

- improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project;
- assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this project;
- formulate tailored capacity building projects to strengthen the national capacity in enhancing innovation.

The results of the evaluation will be reported to HLG-MOS.

Following the issuance of the final report, the Project Manager will develop a Management Response for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, management response and progress on implementation of recommendations will be publicly available on the UNECE website.

VIII. Criteria for evaluators

The evaluator should have:

1. An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant data and statistics.
2. Knowledge of and experience in working on modernisation of official statistics desirable.
3. Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management, gender mainstreaming and human-rights due diligence.
4. Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations, including demonstrated experience in conducting questionnaires and interviews.
5. Fluency in written and spoken English.

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.

⁸ Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator