

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE VALUE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Prepared by the Task Force

*The paper presents the terms of reference of the Task Force on the value of official statistics. The Bureau decided to establish a task force to value the impact of official statistics in February 2015, and asked the group of countries and organisations, led by the United Kingdom, to prepare the terms of reference. **The Bureau reviewed and approved the proposed terms of reference in May 2015.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. The issue of valuing the impact of official statistics is closely linked to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics that provide unique criteria to ensure the production of objective and reliable information for everyone. Regardless the central role of official statistics in informing decision makers and society at large, stakeholders sometimes fail to see the value of official statistics. Currently, tight budget constraints are imposed on many national statistical offices, despite the growing demand for statistics globally and challenges arising from the increasingly competitive information industry.

2. Under these conditions, the need for international work to define and measure the value of official statistics and its impact on decision making has become ever more important to enable:

- Defining, in the midst of Data Revolution, what is the business of official statistics.
- Conveying the reasons why investment in official statistics should be made.
- Pooling good practices of statistical offices to support mutual learning.
- Identifying and developing better ways to explain the value of official statistics.

3. In April 2014, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held a seminar on “What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate that value?” The Conference stated that the value of official statistics should be promoted as a global asset, and called for cooperation and joint actions at the international level, for example to develop a common language and terminology related to the value of official statistics; and to measure the economic value of official statistics through collection of case studies.

4. In October 2014, the CES Bureau discussed follow-up to the recommended actions, and asked a group of interested countries and organisations to develop a road-map to explore the key aspects to be covered in further work on the value of official statistics. A group composed of the United Kingdom (chair), Austria, Canada, Mexico, OECD and UNECE prepared a concept note on the way forward which the CES Bureau discussed at its meeting in February 2015. In consequence, the CES Bureau decided to establish a task force on the value of official statistics.

II. MANDATE

5. The Task Force work is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau, and it reports to the CES Bureau. The Task Force will submit an interim report and a final report.

III. OBJECTIVE

6. The objective of the Task Force will be to define the value of official statistics and develop ways for its measurement that will allow for better understanding and communication of this value to society. The Task Force will assess the feasibility of developing a framework and a set of indicators for valuing the impact of official statistics.

7. The Task Force will coordinate its work with the related CES groups that deal with communication issues to ensure cohesion, avoid duplication and encourage a stronger focus on the value of official statistics.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

8. The Task Force will undertake its work in two phases. During the first phase the following activities will be carried out:

- (a) Define what is meant by the value of official statistics:
 - i. Consider what the users and stakeholders value in official statistics;
 - ii. Collect cases showcasing the value of official statistics for decision making;
 - iii. Consider how official statisticians can build additional value by working jointly with the private sector or other stakeholders. *An in-depth review of strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the information industry, to be prepared by Canada, will feed into this work;*

(b) Review current practices, measurement frameworks and indicators that may exist in statistical offices for valuing the impact of official statistics;

(c) Explore how other industries are measuring and communicating the value of their output;

- (d) Develop ways to measure the value of official statistics:
 - i. Identify possible indicators that could show the value of official statistics;
 - ii. Develop a framework with a set of indicators, if considered feasible;

(e) Recommend actions for promoting and increasing the value of official statistics.

9. The output of this phase will be a report which defines the value of official statistics and suggests how to measure it and how to promote better understanding of this value.

10. During the second phase, the work will take forward avenues suggested by the outcome of the first phase. This is likely to include, inter alia:

(a) Pilot testing of the indicator framework in countries;

(b) Collecting and analysing data to find evidence of the value of official statistics and any correlations between good governance and investment into official statistics;

(c) Drafting a convincing narrative that can be used for better communication of the value of official statistics.

V. TIMETABLE

11. The first activities of the Task Force for the period from early 2015 to early 2016, are planned according to the following indicative timetable:

Timing	Task
Mar-Apr 2015	Agree on the terms of reference and the work plan; Identify task leaders and launch work on tasks (a) to (c)
May-Jul 2015	Analyse the findings of the explorative HLG survey and the findings from tasks (a) to (c)
Aug-Oct 2015	Launch work to identify possible indicators and to develop a framework for valuing the impact of official statistics (d)
Nov-Dec 2015	Consider recommended actions for promoting better understanding of the value of official statistics (e)
Dec 2015	Submit an interim report to the CES Bureau
Feb 2016	Consider feedback from the CES Bureau and finalise the interim report
Mar 2016	Submit the interim report to the April 2016 CES plenary session for discussion

VI. METHODS OF WORK

12. The Task Force will primarily work via email and telephone conferences. Face-to-face meetings may be organized, preferably on the occasion of events attended by a significant number of Task Force members. Participation to the meetings will be self-funded.

13. The Task Force will coordinate activities with the UNECE High-Level Group Modernisation Committee on Products and Sources that is dealing with the communication and marketing aspects of the value of official statistics and with the Modernisation Committee on Standards that is developing standard tools for statistical production that can also be used for cost estimation. The Work Sessions on the Communication of Statistics provide a possible platform for discussing issues emerging from the Task Force work.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

14. The following countries and international organisations have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: the United Kingdom (chair), Canada, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Turkey, Eurostat and OECD.

15. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Task Force.

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