



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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CES Seminar 2013

“Challenges in implementing the SEEA and measuring sustainable development in follow up to Rio+20”

Session I: Measuring sustainable development in follow up to Rio+20

Organiser: Switzerland

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Geneva, 10th June 2013



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The context, follow-up to Rio+20

- The Future We Want, adopted in Rio, June 2012
- Sustainable development according to Brundtland (here and now, later, elsewhere, distribution)
- Towards sustainable development and eradication of poverty by the ecological transition of the economy
- SDGs for all countries (unlike MDGs), defined by politicians and the civil society for 2015 and later.



The context, the report of the TF-SD

- Conceptual framework defined by statisticians, based on the Brundtland definition.
- Measuring well-being including a capital approach.
- Measuring inequality and distribution
- Conceptualisation of the global dimension, closely linked to the framework
- Implementation of accounting systems (SEEA, ...)



Opportunities and challenges

The conceptual framework:

- Ensures stability in time, regardless of changes in the political agenda
- Ensures all aspects are taken into consideration
- Avoids political bias
- Highlights gaps in data and methodology

The process of the definition of SDGs:

- New statistical needs appear
- Necessity of establishing dialogue between stakeholders and statisticians
- Encourage the definition of measurable goals and targets
- Make communication of results simple and understandable



Invited papers

1. L'intérêt d'une démarche participative pour définir un tableau de bord statistique du développement durable (France)
2. Experiences with sustainability indicators and well-being measurement in Germany – a dialogue between the political and statistical communities (Germany)
3. Measuring the Global Dimension of Sustainable Development (Eurostat)



Supporting papers

- Statistics for sustainable development – the progress of work and plans of Polish official statistics in view of the Rio+20 challenges (Poland)
- Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The process of establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (UNECE)



Main topics from the papers and the context

- I. Importance of the dialogue between politicians, the civil society and the statistical communities (France, Germany, Eurostat, Poland, Stiglitz-report)
- II. Beyond the frontier (Eurostat, TF-SD)
- III. From measuring to communicating sustainable development: the roles of goals, targets and assessment (Germany, France, Eurostat, Poland)



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I. Dialogue, participation





I. Dialogue, participation (a)

Dialogue between politicians, the civil society and the statistical communities

Challenges:

- have a clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities
- keep the independence of statistics

Opportunities:

- build-up trust between the actors
- increase good governance
- further the definition of measurable goals



I. Dialogue, participation (b)

Importance of having a conceptual framework:

- Help to keep the dialogue independent from political power
- Ensure stability in time, independent from political agenda
- Ensure a holistic view of sustainable development and a good balance between social, economic and environmental indicators
- Help to identify data and indicator gaps



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II. Beyond the frontier



Swiss Statistics



II. Beyond the frontier (a)

Global dimension of sustainable development as:

- Setting up internationally comparable indicators in the context of Rio+20 (SDGs), and also goals and targets?
- Measuring interdependence, inter-linkages and trans-boundary impacts
 - Globalisation (mainly with the focus on economic integration)
 - As defined in the TF-SD Report (“elsewhere” dimension of sustainable development)



II. Beyond the frontier (b)

Measuring interdependence, inter-linkages and trans-boundary impacts, elusive tasks, because they are:

- multidimensional
- “multi-country”
- multilayered

and it concerns also the regional and sub-regional level

The statistical community has to define priorities in developing methods and filling in gaps.



III. From measuring to communicating (a)

According to “The Future We Want” (§247 and 250), the SDGs should be:

- concise, easy to communicate
- assessed by targets and indicators

SDGs, targets and indicators have to be defined according to the frameworks and the requirements of official statistics

Statisticians have to contribute to this process





III. From the measure to communicating (b)

The assessment of goals and targets, a new challenge for the NSI?

Opportunities/Risks

- Contribute to a good communication for a broad audience
- Guarantee the neutrality and independence of the assessment
- Simple or simplistic message



III. From the measure to communicating (c)

The assessment of goals and targets, a new challenge for the NSI?

Challenges

- Sound methodological background
- Respect of the principle of transparency
- Clear distribution of the responsibility
- Require a balance between completeness and communicability



Conclusions from the papers (1)

Building up SDGs that should be measured requires a dialogue between statisticians and stakeholders and a sound conceptual framework.





Conclusions from the papers (2)

Well-defined safeguards are necessary to ensure a clear distribution of the roles and of the responsibility between the actors and guarantee the quality of the data and the independence of the NSI.





Conclusions from the papers (3)

The importance of trans-boundary impact is growing, especially in the Rio+20 context. The statistical community must be able to meet demand by offering reliable and relevant information





Conclusions from the papers (4)

Should the assessment of progress towards goals and targets be made and communicated by statisticians?





Conclusions from the papers (5)

The communication of progress towards goals and targets remains a walk on the edge between completeness and simple communication to a broad audience





Questions to the invited papers

1. Where should the line be drawn between the responsibilities of policy makers and those of NSI in the measurement of SD? How do we ensure a strong link between policy needs and statistical feasibility?
2. What are the main challenges of the dialogue with stakeholders, which safeguards should we use?
3. Main priorities and actions to be taken to further the implementation of the TF-SD Report? How can we coordinate even better the international initiatives?
4. With limited resources, how can we deal with establishing [a] internationally comparable goals and [b] measuring inter-linkages and trans-boundary impacts? Is [a] or [b] priority?



Questions to the plenum

1. What can/should the statistical community do to have a stronger voice and influence in the process of definition of SDGs?
2. How should priorities be set for the development of a statistical system and by whom in order to meet the needs of Rio +20?
3. How could we organise the international coordination?
4. What main priorities and actions are to be taken to further the implementation and follow up of the Report of the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development (TF-SD)?