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Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the 2018 CES plenary session**Summary of the consultation on topics for the seminars to be held during the 2019 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians****Note by the Secretariat****Addendum****Proposal for the seminars to be held during the 2019 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians***Summary*

The document presents a proposal by the CES Bureau on topics for the two seminars to take place during the 2019 CES plenary session. The proposal is based on the outcome of the electronic consultation with the CES members in May 2018 (ECE/CES/2018/19).

The Conference was invited to take a decision on the 2019 seminar topics on 19 June 2018 under agenda item 10.



I. Proposed topics for the CES 2019 seminars

A. First topic: New data sources – accessibility and use

1. This topic received the highest number of votes: 38 votes (34 from countries and 4 from international organizations).

Volunteers to organize the seminar: Switzerland and United States, in collaboration with Eurostat, OECD and UNSD

Possible papers: Georgia; the Netherlands; Norway; Slovenia; Sweden; Switzerland; UNCTAD

2. Statistical offices increasingly turn to alternative data sources, such as geospatial data, big data or administrative data to address the new data demands and increase the efficiency and quality of the regular data production. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development gives an additional impetus to using new data sources.

3. The extent to which such sources can be and are used already for producing official statistics varies greatly depending on the domain and country. There are common challenges, such as data quality, use of different units, concepts and definitions, and data linking. Often a major obstacle is obtaining access to the new data sources, which remains challenging in practice, even if authorised by law.

4. For using the new data sources, strong partnerships based on mutually beneficial collaboration are needed. The seminar should build on already ongoing work on strategic partnerships, including the outcome of the UNECE high-level seminar on strategic partnerships in April 2018, and the work by the organising committee of the seminar, including principles and a framework for creating strategic partnerships.

5. The seminar should demonstrate concrete cases of using new data sources for official statistics. It may be interesting to invite some private companies to speak about their use of big data.

6. The seminar could discuss the following issues:

- How to use the strengths of NSOs, such as statistical expertise and access to a vast range of data sources, and forge win-win partnerships with data providers?
- How to incorporate the use of new data sources into the statistical production process?
- How the practices in harnessing the potential of new data sources differ across statistical domains and what lessons learnt can be shared between domains?
- What new skills and capabilities are needed to form new partnerships with data providers and integrate new data sources?
- How to facilitate access to commercial information at international level, including information held by big multinational companies (e.g. Google); OECD offered to share their experience in this area.

7. The seminar should lead to concrete outcomes, such as identifying what the international statistical community and international organizations can do to facilitate access to new data sources in practice (e.g. to develop a model contract for data access, join forces in negotiating with the big companies, etc.).

B. Second topic: Emerging role of NSOs as offices for statistics and data

8. The seminar is based on the topic “Meaningful engagement with policy makers – impartiality and relevance of NSOs” which received 25 votes (23 from countries and 2 from international organizations). It focuses on a specific aspect of NSOs engagement with policy makers and governments, dealing with an emerging role of NSOs as data stewards for national governments. The seminar would allow to discuss various aspects of this emerging evolution of the traditional role of NSOs.

Volunteers to organize the seminar: Canada, New Zealand, Serbia, UK, in collaboration with UNSD

Possible papers: Estonia, the Netherlands; Poland

9. In order to maintain their relevance and increase the impact of official statistics, given the proliferation of data sources and data providers, NSO's in many countries are taking on leadership roles as data custodians in their governments. In some cases, NSOs may be asked by their government to take on this role, or NSOs can act proactively to increase their influence and enhance trust in government-wide data ecosystems. A number of countries, including Canada, Estonia, New Zealand, the UK and Netherlands are involved in a data stewardship role for their national governments in addition to being providers of official statistics.

10. The ability to create new value and release new policy insights from data is critically dependent on building and maintaining public confidence in the trusted sourcing, management, and use of data. In order to increase public trust and confidence data stewards are increasingly involved in issues of data ethics, privacy and governance.

11. The seminar would address a number of strategic and operational issues related to NSOs playing a data stewardship role, such as but not limited to:

- (a) Implications for current NSO legal mandates and structures;
- (b) Implications for current organizational structures, infrastructure, competencies, leadership, accountabilities and cultures of NSO's;
- (c) Risks and opportunities-mitigation and capitalization;
- (d) International coordination, cooperation and lessons sharing;
- (e) Boundaries: how far is too far?
- (f) How do we measure and communicate successes and failures.

II. Next steps

12. The seminar organizers will develop the outlines for the seminars. The Bureau will consider the organization of the CES 2019 seminars at its meeting in October 2018.