

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
19 June 2019

English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-seventh plenary session

Paris, 26-28 June 2019

Item 4 (e) of the provisional agenda

Strategic communications framework**Results of the consultation on the “Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions”****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

The document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions* (ECE/CES/2019/7). The Secretariat carried out the electronic consultation in March/April 2019.

A total of 42 countries and 2 international organizations replied to the consultation. All countries and organisations supported the endorsement of the Framework, subject to the comments provided in the consultation. This note presents the substantive comments received, together with the replies of the Project Manager and a Task Team that prepared the Framework, including suggestions for amendments to the Framework to address the comments. The updated Framework is available as document ECE/CES/2019/7/Rev.1 at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48575>.

It was noted in the consultation that the Framework may not cover all issues around strategic communications and that more information may need to be added. Therefore, the Task Team proposes to change the title to *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions, Phase 1*, to make it clearer that more information will be added in a second Phase of the project that is carried out this year.

In view of the support received, the 2019 Conference of European Statisticians plenary session will be invited to endorse the *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions, Phase 1* (ECE/CES/2019/7/Rev.1).



I. Introduction

1. The document summarizes comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Framework in March/April 2019.
2. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviewed the draft Framework in February 2019 and requested the Secretariat to send the document to all CES members for electronic consultation.
3. The following 44 countries and international organizations replied to the consultation: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA (Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labour Statistics), SESRIC and UNSD.
4. The draft *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions* was also endorsed by the annual workshop of the High-level Group for Modernization of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) in November 2018.
5. The updated Framework that takes into account the comments received through electronic consultation is available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48575>.

II. Summary of feedback

6. All responding countries and organizations considered the Framework ready for approval by CES, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided in the consultation.
7. All responding countries and organizations also indicated that the Framework provides a good overview of the topic as well as concrete advice for developing strategic communication.
8. Many countries acknowledged the value of the Framework. General remarks of appreciation for the importance and usefulness of the Framework were made by a number of countries including: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom and USA (Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labour Statistics). Below are some of the comments on the usefulness of the Framework:
 - (a) “We find this document very useful during this time where the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Argentina continues with the reconstruction of national statistical capacity, and where communication offices play an active role in the recovery of public trust.” (Argentina);
 - (b) “The material is very useful and easy to read most of the cases. All the examples are useful and case studies make this document very practical work instrument. Very well done!” (Estonia)
 - (c) “The Framework is very helpful to support the strategic decision making that an organization is confronted with. It emphasises that communication is no longer just the last step in a statistics production process but becomes a crucial factor for the future viability of an (official) institution. And it helps understanding that having a visual identity and presence in social media channels is not enough to increase awareness of users. All we do in communication directly pays into reputation- or damages it. NSOs should keep in mind that today’s communication is essential for the relevance and role that official statistics want to play in democratic societies in the future. The Framework identifies a range of starting points and offers helpful tools and examples for this complex task.” (Germany);

(d) “The Framework is a ‘must have’ (must read & implement) for authorities of every NSO.” (Poland);

(e) “An important work, a useful and timely document for any statistical organization, regardless of its degree of maturity.” (Portugal);

(f) “We are now developing a communication strategy and a crisis management policy and soon will be developing a new brand, so the document is very useful for our activity.” (Republic of Moldova);

(g) “It is useful in its ability to provide a consistent baseline of understanding of communication when working with other NSO’s. As much of its content is universal in appeal and application, adopting its principles supports the modernisation agenda and helps ensure mutual understanding of communication objectives and principles. Consequently, the framework will be most well-suited to NSOs with small and disparate communication teams that lack a ‘route in’ to developing a strategic approach.” (United Kingdom).

III. General comments

9. Australia, Estonia and Hungary suggested to maintain the publication in an online version.

10. Australia also noted that for future development, the Framework may benefit from further discussion on risks associated with undertaking various forms of external communication, especially as these will change over time.

11. Latvia suggested that the Framework should be aligned with the CES *Recommendations for Promoting Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics*, as they stress the idea that the value of statistics increases by putting users of statistics truly in the centre – “official statistical products are no use unless they meet someone’s needs”. This is not just about logos or graphics but fundamentally about providing products and services that meet the needs of our users. The *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions* could include more of the user perspective – regarding the development of products and services (data, tools, stories, channels), as well as meeting user expectations and communicating with them in a creative way.

12. Serbia proposed to conduct a small survey amongst NSOs to see in which state they are concerning strategic communications (related to the Communications Maturity Model).

13. UNSD considered the document well-articulated, informative and easy to read but suggested that the term “Framework” should be replaced with another term, like “Practices” as this is more adequate. UNSD considered that the following could be better described in the document:

(a) Concerning branding, the document seems to be restricted to the main producer(s) of official statistics. Also, branding is not only for users but also respondents and data providers (admin data, big data...). It will be good to include reference to the enforcement of the UN *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* (FPOS) through a sound national legislation.

(b) The communication framework should be better integrated with other models and guidelines. Therefore, links should be made to other relevant UNECE work, like Generic Statistical Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO), Generic Law on Official Statistics (GLOS) and other guidelines on legislation and value of official statistics.

(c) It could be further indicated where strategic communication fits overall in the management of a statistical institution.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Team

14. Following the proposal from Australia, Estonia and Hungary, the Task Team will create an on-line version of the Framework on the UNECE wiki site. The Task Team will also ask countries to provide more case studies and include links to reference documents.

15. Not every *statistical* institution is at the same level of maturity and resourcing. The Maturity Model described in Section 1.2 is intended to reflect this reality. Unfortunately, there is no time to conduct a survey of the strategic communications maturity levels of NSOs (as suggested by Serbia). Countries are encouraged to do assessment themselves and share results on the wiki page of the Framework.

16. The title of the publication was changed to *Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions, Phase 1*, to make it clearer that the work will continue on the second phase to make it more comprehensive.

17. The work on this project was based on the experiences of National Statistical Offices. However, research on practices outside NSOs was conducted (particularly in the area of branding, the maturity model and issues management) and where appropriate is referenced throughout the document. The mandate of the project was to develop a framework to be used by NSOs. It was not our objective to develop a Framework or branding activities across the entire statistical system. In relation to the branding scope, this would be better considered in the work related to the development of National Data Strategies.

18. A reference and link to UN-FPOS and *Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics* has been added. It was outside of the scope of this project to establish links to GAMSOS and GLOS. This could be considered in the second Phase of the project.

IV. Specific comments on various chapters of the Framework

19. Several countries provided specific comments on chapters of the Framework. The substantive comments are presented in this section, together with the responses of the Task Team to address the comments received. Editorial comments and suggestions were considered in revising the Framework but are not covered in this note.

A. Chapter I. Assessing the statistical organizations

20. Croatia and Portugal suggested that this chapter should pay special attention also to the internal marketing activities which are not covered significantly at the moment. This would be important to achieve a harmonized internal and external communication.

21. Denmark asked for specific guidance on how top management in statistical institutions can integrate communication in the overall strategy of the institution.

22. Israel and Serbia asked for more practical examples. Figure 1 should be explained in more detail and Figure 3 (Communications Maturity Model) is difficult to read because of the small font.

23. Romania suggested to add another skill for the team of the Communications Department: a solid economics/statistics background for the correct understanding of the subject-matter needed in drawing the infographics.

24. UK proposed to use 'Johari Window' application when looking at tools and techniques, to determine the known-unknowns, blind spots of NSOs, etc.

25. US Bureau of Labour Statistics asked to clarify who communicates: is it the technical expert or the communications expert?

Response and changes proposed by the Task Team

26. The internal communication and marketing activities and integrating communication strategy in the overall strategy of the institution (mentioned by Croatia, Denmark and Portugal) will be addressed in the Strategic Communication Framework Project Phase 2.
27. Issues raised by Israel and Serbia will be addressed by creating an interactive version of the publication on the wiki site. It will make reading of the charts/tables easier and will provide a platform for the countries to share additional practical examples.
28. Suggestion on the skills for the Communications Department made by Romania was added to the section regarding official spokespeople.
29. The risk assessment and determining knowns-unknowns and blind spots (raised by UK) are not part of the scope of the current publication. Countries are encouraged to do their own risk assessment to be aware of the gaps.
30. The skills of the spokesperson are the choice of the country. For example, in the Netherlands experts are used as speakers. The Task Team added sentence regarding the selection of the spokesperson. Country examples will be added to on-line publication.

B. Chapter II. Designing and implementing strategic communications

31. Argentina considered the approach of communication skills as market skills very interesting. They asked for more information on how these concepts could be approached, as NSOs are not commercial enterprises but organizations that implement public government policies. For example, the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina does not talk about market or client research but prefers to address citizens as users or 'personas'.
32. Australia proposed to add some refinements in the paragraph on Communications objectives. External communication of statistics is not about changing attitudes or altering behaviour, they are more useful for internal communication and cultural change.
33. Bulgaria proposed to describe in detail the pros and cons of different social networks as well as the resources needed to make them an effective channel of communication. It would be a basis for NSOs to take an informed decision how to use social media in the strategic communication.
34. Chile mentioned that the proper use of the different communication channels to reach different audiences is very well reflected in this chapter. The treatment given to crisis management is also appropriate. But the account of some more common cases that can cause a crisis and how they have been resolved by statistical organizations is missing.
35. Croatia suggested to emphasise more the importance of constant dialogue with users. User satisfaction survey is an excellent tool to find out what your users really need, and it should be conducted periodically. It is very important to adjust it to gain most effect out of the communication. Potential problem in that area could be lack of qualified staff. Most of the employees are statisticians without any communication experience. Therefore, it would be useful in this chapter to mention internal communication workshops as a part of developing communication strategy.
36. Denmark and Lithuania proposed in the "Step 3 – define key audiences" to add teachers, students at educational institutions and representatives of the young generation as they are often the most frequent users.
37. Serbia asked for more clarity in "Audience segmentation" in the difference between influencers and scrutinizers. The recommendation for preparing standby statements could be very useful and pragmatic if crisis take place.
38. UK asked for a greater focus on horizon scanning and planning of communications to strengthen this section.
39. The US Bureau of Labour Statistics noted that when implementing some practical suggestions in the paragraph on Crisis communications organizations may run into conflict

between administrative requirements and communications needs. The Framework might address how to ensure that all levels of management approve the crisis communications plan. It can also address how to avoid internal rumours when crisis occurs, and how to ensure that agency speaks with a single voice.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Team

40. The user satisfaction surveys, training staff for communication skills and establishing the crisis communications plan (mentioned by Croatia and US Bureau of Labour Statistics) will be addressed in the Strategic Communication Framework Project Phase 2.

41. Issues raised by Bulgaria, Chile and UK will be addressed by creating interactive version of the publication on the wiki site. Countries are invited to share their examples on the wiki site of the Framework.

42. In response to Australian comment, the Task Team suggested that these objectives could be used for both internal and external communication.

43. In response to Argentina's comment Task Team prefers to continue using term customer orientation as it is a very commonly used term in many countries.

44. Suggestions made by Denmark and Lithuania were added to the Framework.

45. The Task Team considers that differences between influencers and scrutinizers are sufficiently explained in the document.

C. Chapter III. Evaluating external communications

46. Australia mentioned that the good evaluation framework provided in the document could benefit from further distinction between measuring social media and traditional media.

47. Chile, Czechia, Republic of Moldova and UK considered the chapter too theoretical and proposed to strengthen it by adding more detail, including more examples of tools and techniques that NSOs can use. Currently, the chapter emphasises the importance and definition well but needs a more practical approach for teams that may otherwise struggle to find a way to undertake meaningful evaluations. More detail on user surveys is available in the *Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communication the Value of Official Statistics* – a reference to this publication should be added.

48. Denmark proposed to include explanation what is KPI, as not everybody is familiar with the concept.

49. Serbia suggested that evaluating external communication should be followed by an action plan for improvement.

Response and changes proposed by the Task Team:

50. The distinction between measuring social media and traditional media will be addressed in the Strategic Communication Framework Project Phase 2.

51. Suggestions made by Denmark and reference to the Value of Official Statistics publication (noted by Moldova) were added to the text.

52. More details and examples (requested by Chile, Czechia, Serbia and UK) will be added in the interactive version of the publication on the wiki site.

D. Annexes

53. A number of countries (Bulgaria, Chile, Czechia, Israel, Serbia) asked for more detail on the examples presented in Annexes, such as how the results were obtained, what questions were asked, number of respondents, particular results, how was the information obtained from employees, and what type of new communication tools they started to use.

54. Australia asked for more case studies to illustrate the material.
55. Bulgaria asked for a good practice example on how to react to fake news containing false data.
56. Poland submitted an additional case study on rebranding of Statistics Poland.

Responses and changes proposed by the Task Team

57. As mentioned earlier, more detail on the examples will be provided in the interactive version of the publication on the wiki site. Countries can also contact the statistical offices for more explanations (contact data was added to the case studies and in the acknowledgment section).
58. The case study from Statistics Poland was added as Annex 5. The Task team will also ask countries to provide more case studies.
59. The proposal by Bulgaria is a good idea for a case study to be included on the wiki site of the publication.

V. Conclusion

60. All responding countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the Framework.
61. The comments and views expressed during the electronic consultation were carefully reviewed by the Task Team. In many cases the Task Team recommends amendments to the Framework to address the issues raised by the countries and organizations. In other cases, the Task Team provides clarifications or explains why – in its opinion - there is no need to amend the document.
62. Many issues raised by the countries will be addressed in the second phase of the Strategic Communication Framework Project that is taking place this year. Other issues will be addressed by creating interactive version of the Framework on the UNECE wiki site. It will make search and reading of the materials easier and will provide a platform for countries to share additional practical examples and to have a Forum for discussion.

VI. Proposal to the Conference

63. In view of the support expressed by countries and organizations, the Conference is invited to endorse the revised Framework (ECE/CES/2019/7/Rev.1) subject to the amendments presented in this document.
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