

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

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Agenda

**CONCEPT NOTE FOR FOLLOW-UP WORK ON
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

Prepared by Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Eurostat and UNECE

The document presents the proposal for further work in the area of strategic partnerships, as a follow-up to the CES seminar on strategic partnerships held in April 2016. The Bureau discussed the concept note and decided on the follow-up actions on strategic partnerships.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The CES Bureau carried out an in-depth review of strategic partnerships in October 2015 based on a paper by Statistics Canada¹. A CES seminar on strategic partnerships was held in April 2016. The main basis for the seminar was a paper by United Kingdom on partnerships in data production². The CES seminar noted that partnerships help to innovate and meet the challenge of increasing expectations towards official statistics.
2. The Bureau discussed follow-up to the CES seminar in October 2016 and emphasised that further work in this area should be well focused to lead to useful practical outcomes. The work should define what is considered a partnership and what kind of partnerships and activities are covered. The legal, organisational and managerial problems associated with different kinds of partnerships may require different approaches.
3. The Bureau noted that sharing examples of partnerships (both successful and unsuccessful) in official statistics is important. Existing wiki platforms could be used for that purpose. The Bureau also suggested developing basic principles for strategic partnerships. Some topics mentioned for follow-up work were: (i) legal frameworks for the sharing of microdata between producers of official statistics nationally and internationally, and (ii) managing the risks of partnerships with IT service providers.
4. The Bureau asked a group of countries to prepare a concept note on further work on strategic partnerships under CES. The work could include undertaking a survey to take stock of the legal and other issues related to strategic partnerships in official statistics. A special seminar on this topic could be organised.

¹ ECE/CES/2016/5

² ECE/CES/2016/16

5. Following this request, a group of countries and organisations, including representatives from Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Eurostat, and UNECE prepared this concept note.

II. STRATEGIC PARTNERS AND TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

6. The new environment in which National Statistical Offices (NSOs) operate is changing the value proposition related to partnerships. While NSOs will continue to be data producers, new roles could emerge, such as being providers of standards or data integrators. The good reputation of NSOs could lead to providing services of certifying data and facilitating a more responsible use of data.

7. A number of NSOs have embarked on a modernisation exercise, and are reviewing the types and models of partnerships that could be established to achieve their objectives. In some cases, partnerships that have existed for a long time (such as with the academia, IT providers or some data providers) are reviewed through different lenses (e.g. regarding capacity building, the provisioning of IT services, using cellular phone information). In other cases, new partnerships have emerged (e.g. integration of satellite images or of scanner data into statistical processes). In addition, there are cases of co-creation partnerships (e.g. crowdsourcing).

8. The group further discussed possible partners and types of partnerships with the aim to identify those that the CES work could focus on. The following types of partnerships could be covered as described below.

A. Partnerships with policy makers

9. In a world where information can come from a multitude of sources within and outside of NSOs, legislators and policy makers have an important role to play in conjunction with NSOs. This type of partnership is essential to discuss new demands but also new opportunities for statistical data, e.g. blending traditional with new sources, elaborating quality profiles (different data for different purposes, conditions of minimum quality, providing analytical services, etc.).

B. Partnerships with data and service providers

10. Most statistical offices now have strategic partnerships with either data providers or with service providers to be able to fulfil their mandate. The requirements for effective partnerships are likely to be different for different groups of partners. These partnerships need to be operating in a way that does not compromise the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and core principles of NSOs, such as the protection of confidentiality and privacy. Often the legislative basis is crucial to make innovation and setting up partnerships possible. The partnerships with data and service providers can be grouped in three categories:

1. Supplier/recipient partnership

11. In the context of an NSO, this can refer to data supplier partnerships such as agreements with data owners (public sector, but increasingly in the private and third sectors) that supply NSOs with their transactions data, customer data, management information or volumetrics for producing official statistics.

12. It can also refer to partnerships with IT service providers - the procurement, either directly or through pan-government supply agreements, of the IT infrastructure of hardware and software necessary to operate a modern NSO.

13. Relationships with citizens – who are either respondents, or who accept to “share” their information with statistical offices – could also be included in this category. Strategic partnerships in this regard can be achieved through different consultation mechanisms, but also through partnerships with different groups of actors where NSOs work with Information Commissioners / Data Protection Supervisors, representatives of key sectors of society, and other producers of data used, for example, for the SDG indicators, to provide assurance to the public, government and parliament about the correctness of the figures that are used to make key decisions.

2. Open innovation/strategic partnership

14. In this case, NSOs work together with another organization that is not the end user. This type of partnership can benefit NSOs with sources of insight, advice, technical and methodological understanding, and innovative approaches to data. This can include knowledge partnerships, sharing knowledge for the advancement of all partners, focusing on areas such as development of methodologies, tools, new products or new data ecosystems (such as using the Internet of Things).

15. Partnerships could be created with academia or the scientific community to develop new methods of data analysis, with researchers from private sector to co-develop new systems, with standardising bodies to achieve interoperability between the components of the systems, and/or with data protection authorities to develop the systems according to the principle privacy by design.

3. Co-creation partnerships

16. In this type of partnership, organisations work with the end customer towards a mutually beneficial outcome. In the case of NSOs, an example could be working with civil society who is a data consumer. This category of partnership could be created with different groups: academics, government and non-government research groups, international organisations, other NSOs who are increasing the use of data sources, or working collaboratively on the mining of statistical data. Or with media/policy makers /citizens to enable the dissemination of official statistics through a variety of tools (social media, infographics, redistribution of results) that facilitate their effective consumption. This should include the partnerships that are established to be able to integrate the data into a cohesive story and into actionable intelligence.

III. AVAILABLE MATERIALS AND LINKS TO OTHER WORK UNDER CES

17. The discussions at different fora can serve as a basis for further work on strategic partnerships. Examples of relevant papers and websites include:

- *In-depth review of strategic partnerships with the information industry* (Statistics Canada) - the paper that was the basis for the in-depth review by the CES Bureau (ECE/CES/2016/5)³ included a lot of examples of partnerships from different countries;
- *Partnerships in data production* (ONS, United Kingdom) – the main paper for the CES seminar in April 2016 (ECE/CES/2016/16)⁴;
- *Public-Private Partnerships for Statistics: Lessons Learned, Future Steps* (Nicholas Robin, Thilo Klein and Johannes Jütting (OECD and Paris21))⁵;
- OECD statistics newsletter issue no 65 (November 2016)⁶ and workshop on “Access to New Data Sources for Statistics: Business Models for Private-Public Partnerships” (December 2015)⁷
- The global working group on big data⁸

18. Further work on strategic partnerships is well in line with recommendations of the Task Force on the Value of Official Statistics to engage with strategic partners and to innovate to remain valuable. A start for sharing the examples of partnerships is made in the wiki on value of official statistics⁹. The wiki presents a number of examples related to value of official statistics, including on partnerships. The description of the partnership examples currently includes only a very brief text that could be developed further.

19. Furthermore, one of the areas where the CES 2016 seminar on strategic partnerships recommended undertaking further work was on a legal framework that can facilitate or hinder building efficient partnerships and its links with the statistical law. A Task Force on common elements of statistical legislation has been set up under CES. Any work related to the legislative basis related to strategic partnerships should take into account the work of this Task Force and could contribute to that.

IV. PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER WORK

20. The CES 2016 seminar was held under the title “strategic partnerships”. The paper by UK considered partnerships in data production which enable innovation in official statistics used for strategic decision-making. Therefore the group proposes that **the work should focus as a priority on strategic partnerships that enable innovation.**

21. The overall goal of strategic partnerships is to share resources in a way that promotes growth for all partners. As mentioned by the UK, new partnerships are required to meet challenges from the global society, economy and environment. Partnerships with the information industry are at the early stage of experimentation. It will take a number of years for these partnerships to mature.

22. For the work under CES, a two-step approach could be considered:

³ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg/ECE_CES_2016_5-1601649E.pdf

⁴ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg/ECE_CES_2016_16-1602357E.pdf

⁵ <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/5jm3nqp1g8wf->

[en.pdf?expires=1485785551&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=2BC8FDF1446D67D235CCFBD304F52BD2](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/5jm3nqp1g8wf-en.pdf?expires=1485785551&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=2BC8FDF1446D67D235CCFBD304F52BD2)

⁶ www.oecd.org/std/statisticsnewsletter

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/std/OECD-Paris21-workshop-december-2015-agenda.pdf>

⁸ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/bigdata/conferences/2016/>

⁹ <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/VALUE/5.+Going+further+with+strategic+partners>

(a) Based on the existing documents, as well as on experiences and the knowledge of the various group members, the group could summarize the different factors and approaches that NSOs have taken into account when creating partnerships of the various types, what has worked well, what has not worked well and issues they foresee in the future. The result of this stage would be an **overview of difficulties with building partnerships in the official statistics community**, which would serve as a (kind of) **gap-analysis** for a more dedicated approach to assist the community.

(b) A second step would be to canvass statistical offices (through a **survey**) to identify what is the main challenge in strategic partnerships that NSOs want to see examined, and to focus the discussion on a specific issue rather than covering partnerships at large.

Based on the feedback of NSOs, the group could organize a **2-day seminar** focusing on one or more of the partnership types, bringing together those who have built successful partnerships of that type and those who are seeking advice and inspiration in building them, to share experience, gather the best practices and lessons learned.

The result of this stage would be a hands-on **information exchange** and assistance for interested participants of the seminar built on concrete cases. This would also result in an overview of the main difficulties found in the community when building successful partnerships. As a result of the seminar, the **basic principles for these types of partnerships could be documented to provide guidance** on how to set up successful strategic partnerships.

23. To disseminate the information, the working group proposes to use a wiki (or confluence site) developed by UNECE. The site would refer not only to the work of this group, but also provide links to other working groups who are doing complementarity activities.

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