

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2018/2019 Bureau  
Paris, 26 June 2019

Item 4 of the Provisional  
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A TASK FORCE TO TEST AND FURTHER  
DEVELOP THE FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING THE VALUE OF OFFICIAL  
STATISTICS**

**Prepared by the Secretariat and the United Kingdom**

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. Official statisticians know that their products, underpinned by the Fundamental Principles of official statistics, are uniquely valuable and essential for evidence-based decision-making, for political accountability and for democracy. However, as technology advances in a world awash with data, producers of official statistics have become increasingly aware that the benefits and value of their products require further justification. There is a requirement to ensure that the value of official statistics is universally recognized and understood — if not, the future of official statistics is at risk.

2. Against this backdrop, a Task Force on Valuing Official Statistics (chaired by the United Kingdom) was established by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in 2015. The Task Force examined what is meant by the ‘value’ of official statistics, inventoried existing approaches to assessing such value, and produced a set of recommendations for National Statistical Offices (NSOs).

3. The proposed new Task Force is a direct follow-up to the work of the Task Force on Valuing Official Statistics. The CES endorsed the *Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics* in 2017 and they have now been published in English, French and Russian<sup>1</sup>. The Recommendations promulgated a measurement framework comprising a set of proposed indicators and suggested methods for producing them.

4. In the ‘Conclusions and next steps’ section of the Recommendations, the previous Task Force suggested that ‘pathfinder’ NSOs should undertake work in line with the proposed measurement framework, with the support of UNECE, and should share their findings and experiences with the wider international statistical community. When endorsing the Recommendations, CES called for pilot testing of the framework for measuring the value of official statistics, and for follow-up of the outcomes of such pilot testing to further develop the framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51139&L=0>

## II. MANDATE

5. The work of the Task Force will be conducted within the framework of CES and its bureau. The Task Force will be established for a period of two years, after which it will submit a final report with recommendations. After its first year of work, the Task Force will prepare an interim report that will be submitted to the CES bureau.

## III. OBJECTIVES

6. The objectives of the Task Force are to test:

- (a) the feasibility of applying the measurement framework
- (b) its utility in producing helpful, understandable measures of the value of official statistics which contribute to the communication goals of statistical agencies
- (c) the degree to which indicators produced according to the framework can be compared across products, agencies and countries.

7. For each of points (a) to (c) above, the exercise will aim to enhance the level of detail and guidance set out in the measurement framework. The result of this pilot testing will be a refined measurement framework, building on the framework produced by the previous Task Force and offering more detailed practical guidance for countries to apply it.

8. A simultaneous and equally important goal of the exercise is to provide a collaborative forum for exchange of ideas, methodology and lessons learned between participating countries.

## IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

9. The measurement framework is divided into three elements:

- (a) **Observable or 'objective' indicators:** Indicators which reflect actual use of official statistics, and/or which reflect adherence to Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
- (b) **Subjective' indicators:** Indicators derived from general or specific user surveys, covering perception, trust, support, satisfaction etc.
- (c) **Monetary valuations** of the impact of statistics. Indicators which place a monetary value on the impacts of statistics, and/or which weigh the value of outputs against the cost of inputs.

10. Countries participating in the Task Force will be required to test at least one of these three elements. Some participants may be only able to test one element, whereas others will be in a position to test two or all three. Although not all participants will be able to pilot all parts of the measurement framework, the work of the Task Force as a whole will ensure that all sections of the framework are tested.

11. Some countries have already begun their own independent exercises which may not be limited only to those indicators and methodologies proposed in the current measurement

framework. Where appropriate these will also be taken into account and considered for inclusion in the final proposals.

12. The activities of the group will therefore be as follows:
- (a) Test the measurement framework (taking note of the observation in paragraph 10).
  - (b) Document the methodologies used
  - (c) Document the resulting indicators produced by each participating country, including any dissemination platforms and communication techniques
  - (d) Document participating countries' self-evaluation of challenges faced, resources required, and lessons learned
  - (e) Develop proposals for a refined measurement framework including detailed practical recommendations for NSOs.

13. For this exercise, descriptions of the challenges experienced, resources required, methodologies used and evaluation of results are as important as the results themselves (the actual measures of value). If and when obstacles are faced, the pilot participants will attempt to identify what might be required to overcome these obstacles.

14. **Particular attention will be paid to the monetary valuations element**, as this is the area posing the greatest potential challenges and in which countries are most in need of guidance. Efforts will be made to develop guidance not only for monetary valuations of outputs, but also of inputs (costs of production), since information about cost/benefit trade-offs is essential for communicating the value of official statistics.

## V. TIMETABLE

15. Many of the individual countries participating in the Task Force already have their own separate plans for deliverables, objectives and timelines. To the extent possible, the piloting exercise will align with these plans.

16. The activities of the Task Force will take place according to the following approximate schedule:

26 Jun 2019	Present terms of reference including work plan to CES Bureau for endorsement
May - Aug 2019	Chair & secretariat gather and organize information on current relevant activities in participating countries; establish which countries will test each part of framework  Countries document their activities, methods, developments & results in preparation for September workshop
<b>24-25 Sep 2019</b>	<b>Kick-off workshop in London, United Kingdom</b>

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Oct 2019-May 2020	Countries continue conducting and documenting piloting activities;  Chair & secretariat draft initial proposals to revise measurement framework & related recommendations in view of findings of piloting countries
May - Aug 2020	Draft interim progress report
Sep-Oct 2020	Submit interim progress report to CES Bureau (meets in October)
Oct-Dec 2020	All piloting countries discuss and agree on proposed refinements to measurement framework & related recommendations; Task Force members draft parts of text; chair & secretariat combine and edit
Jan-Feb 2021	Submit final report containing revised measurement framework & related recommendations to CES Bureau for discussion (meets in February)
Mar-Apr 2021	Electronic consultation among CES countries; revise according to input from CES Bureau and from consultation; finalize and edit
May 2021	Submit final report to the CES plenary session for endorsement (meets in June)

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## **VI. METHODS OF WORK**

17. The Task force will work primarily by making use of a wiki workspace and via email exchange and teleconferences where appropriate. UNECE and the UK will provide support and guidance to participating countries.

18. A kick-off workshop will take place in London, United Kingdom, in September 2019. The workshop will have the aims of sharing current activities and results; of agreeing on the way forward for the Task Force; and of formulating initial recommendations. The workshop will be hosted by the UK. Attendance will be self-funded by participating countries.

## **VII. MEMBERSHIP**

19. During the member State consultation on the Recommendations and the ensuing discussion at the 65th plenary session of the CES in June 2017, several countries and agencies indicated their interest in participating in this piloting exercise. Others have since independently begun related work. The secretariat and the chairing country (United Kingdom) have subsequently canvassed for volunteers both within the UNECE region and globally to ensure that as many as possible of those currently attempting to measure the value of their official statistical products are involved in this pilot testing exercise.

20. The United Kingdom will chair the Task Force. Currently there are 26 countries or offices willing to participate in the testing of the framework. These are Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cape Verde, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Mauritius, Lithuania, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America (Bureau of Labor Statistics) and United States of America (Bureau of Economic Analysis).

21. In its work the Task Force will avoid duplication of efforts with other organizations and at the same time ensure mutual learning between different organizations attempting similar tasks. Other countries and international organizations are welcome to participate in the work.
22. UNECE will act as the secretariat of the Task Force.

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