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15 – 17 May 2019

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

##### Communicating gender statistics

## Communicating Gender Statistics: challenges, solutions and best practices. Interim report of a UNECE Task Force

Note by The Task Force on Communicating Gender Statistics

### *Abstract*

The Task Force on Communicating Gender Statistics was established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2018, in response to calls from gender focal points across the region at the December 2017 Work Session on Gender Statistics. The Task Force brainstormed the main challenges in communication that are unique or especially pertinent to gender statistics, taking care to recognize that much international work is already ongoing in the realm of communication of statistics more generally. The group identified a selection of key areas and decided to draft short guidance notes, to be presented in interactive electronic format. The group is also compiling an online database of good practice examples. Progress towards both products will be presented and participants are invited to provide feedback, as well as to contribute further good practice examples. The group hopes to benefit from discussions at this Work Session to feed into the continued work of the Task Force.

\*Prepared by Ms. Helen Cahill and Ms. Fiona Willis-Núñez in consultation with members of the Task Force

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## I. Background

1. Gender statistics, just like statistics on any other topic, are valuable to users only if they are easily found and accessible, and if users find them relevant and understandable. The responsibility of National Statistics Offices (NSOs) does not stop at production or dissemination – action must be taken to communicate gender statistics. i.e. to promote awareness, understanding and use. This is true of all statistical areas but brings particular challenges for gender statistics.
2. Firstly, gender-related data come from many different sources and may be spread around many products and hard to find, or in some cases, not published at all. Secondly, gender issues occupy a unique place in policymaking. This means that NSOs must take extra care when communicating gender statistics to balance the need to remain impartial with the obligation to produce relevant data to inform policymaking and answer the needs of those who require the data. Producers of gender statistics are thus faced with a need to communicate the statistics themselves and also their meaning and value.
3. The growing importance of communication is not unique to gender statistics. For example, the High Level group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) in 2018 developed a strategic framework for communicating with data users and the general public. UNECE has produced guidance in the form of the ‘Making Data Meaningful’ series of publications. The 2010 publication ‘Developing Gender Statistics: A Practical Tool’ includes a chapter on ‘Improving the use of gender statistics’ which clarifies the distinction between communication and dissemination.

### A. Establishment of the Task Force

4. The Steering Group on Gender Statistics developed terms of reference for a proposed new Task Force, and the proposal was presented to the Bureau of the CES in February 2018. The Bureau accepted the proposal and established the Task Force, with a mandate until June 2020, by which time the group is expected to present its findings and products. The terms of reference can be found in document ECE/CES/BUR/2018/FEB/8<sup>1</sup>.
5. The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidance for NSOs and other producers of gender statistics on the communication of gender statistics, focusing on both communication with policymakers and with the public. It is concentrating on those aspects that are *specific or especially pertinent to gender statistics*, while ensuring coherence with and avoiding duplication of other initiatives on statistical dissemination and communication more generally.
6. The terms of reference call for the Task Force to identify communication challenges for gender statistics; review current practices and collect examples of good practice; and produce a set of recommendations for tackling the challenges identified.
7. CES member countries and international organizations were invited to nominate participants to be part of the Task Force. The group currently consists of 37 individuals representing 18

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<sup>1</sup> Available online at <http://www.unece.org/statistics/networks-of-experts/task-force-on-communicating-gender-statistics.html>

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countries<sup>2</sup>, 7 organizations<sup>3</sup> and one independent expert. The Task force is chaired by Helen Cahill of Ireland.

## B. Initial brainstorming exercises

8. The Task Force began its work by collectively brainstorming, by means of an online wiki tool, on two key areas: issues and challenges in communicating gender statistics, and examples of effective communication of gender statistics. The brainstorming exercises were conducted in a manner analogous to a ‘real-life’ brainstorming that might take place in a face-to-face workshop, where participants would write their ideas on post-it notes and facilitators would organize them into common themes. To achieve this electronically, participants wrote ideas on virtual post-it notes and the chair and secretariat summarized and grouped them.
9. Figures 1 to 3 below illustrate the results of the two brainstorming exercises (n.b. the figures are for illustrative purposes only, to demonstrate how the work was undertaken—it is not intended that readers should be able to read the contents of these figures clearly).
10. The purpose of these two activities was to determine the main themes on which the Task Force should focus its efforts, as well as to gather thoughts about effective solutions to form the basis of recommendations for good practice.

### 1. Brainstorming #1: Issues and challenges in communicating gender statistics

11. In this exercise Task Force members were asked to add brief examples of issues encountered in the communication of gender statistics, aiming to address questions in four categories:
  - i. **Sources:** what challenges for communication are posed by the data themselves?
  - ii. **Messages:** what challenges arise about what should be communicated? Are there political sensitivities, taboos, etc?
  - iii. **Products, platforms and channels:** which challenges of disseminating, presenting etc. are specific to gender statistics?
  - iv. **Users:** what specific challenges do we in gender statistics face in identifying users, working with them, gathering and acting on feedback?

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Australia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> CIS-Stat, Council of Europe, Data2X, Eurostat, UNICEF.

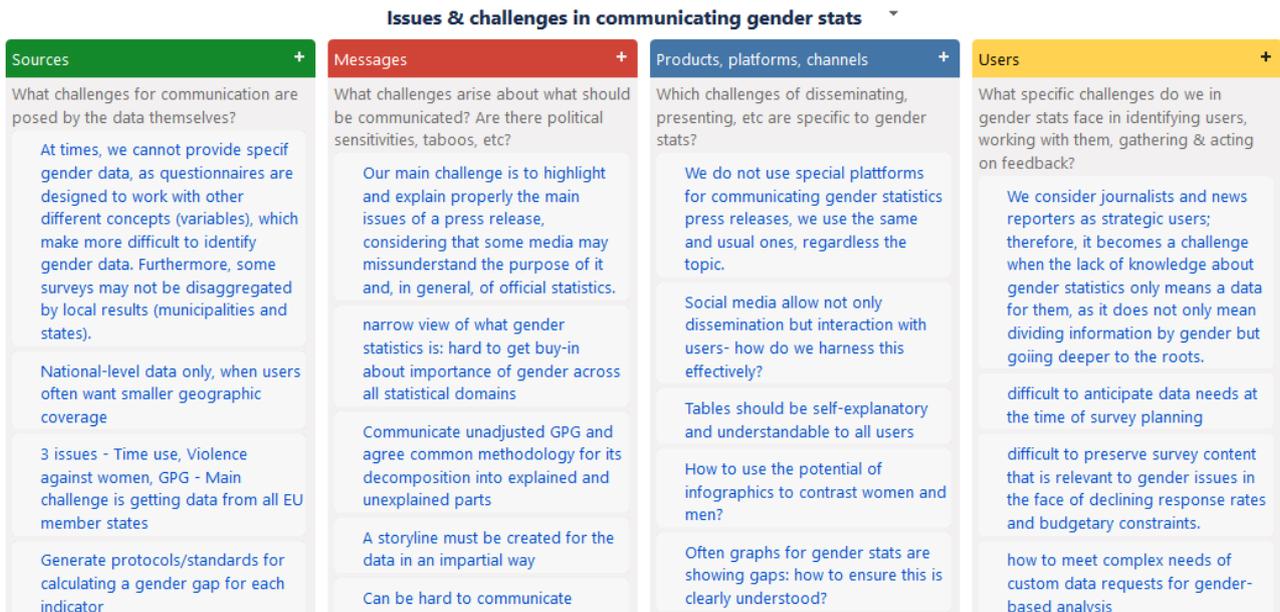


Figure 1: Screenshot of wiki-based brainstorming exercise #1

- Some of the contributions from Task Force members were similar to one-another, and some were longer pieces of text. The format used allowed similar entries to be combined, and hovering a mouse over an entry then reveals the longer individual ideas as contributed (as shown in figure 2).

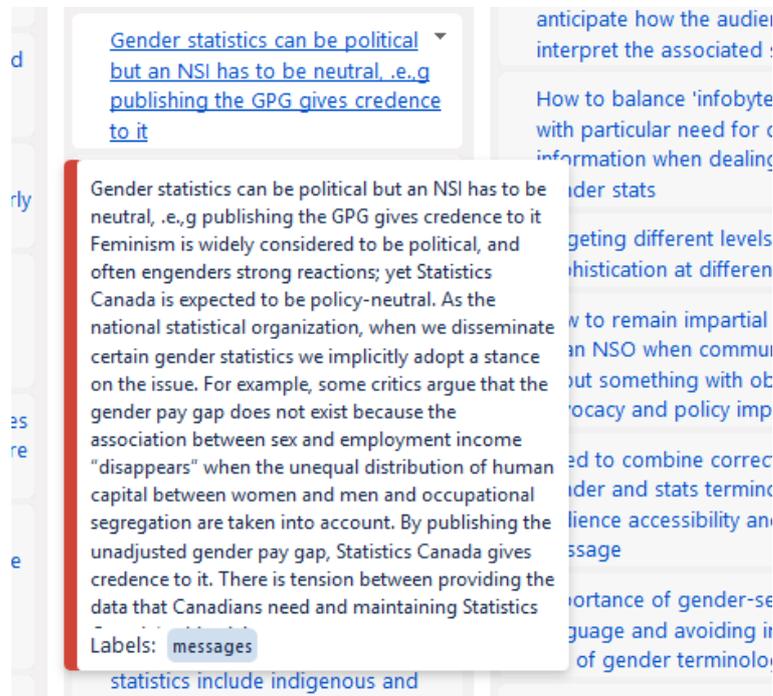


Figure 2: Screenshot of longer text provided by a Task Force member for one 'post-it note' idea

## 2. Brainstorming #2: Good practices and examples

13. In this exercise Task Force members were invited to briefly share with the rest of the group examples from their own experience or from others, of effective communication of gender statistics. They were asked to consider examples in four categories, considering the following prompting questions:
- Examples of good **dissemination products**: what makes them good practices?
  - Good practices in **working with users**: what works? Why is this unique or especially relevant to gender statistics?
  - Good practices in **messaging**: what has worked well to overcome the sensitivities of communicating gender statistics?
  - Other good practices**: what else is important for effective communication of gender statistics?

**Good practices & examples** ▾

Examples of good dissemination pr... +	Good practices in working with users +	Good practices in messaging +	Other good practices +
<p>Add a link if possible. What makes this a good practice?</p> <p>INEGI (Mexico): - Atlas de Género (Gender Atlas): besides providing gender information on different topics such as education, health, and work, information can be seen on a geographical basis (Mexican map including states division) <a href="http://gaia.inegi.org.mx/atlas_genero/">http://gaia.inegi.org.mx/atlas_genero/</a></p> <p>Statistics Finland: 1) Pocket book "Women and Men in Finland" in every other year (next one in autumn 2018 with a new name "Gender Equality in Finland"). 2)</p>	<p>What works? Why is this unique or especially relevant to gender stats?</p> <p>INEGI (Mexico): Working closely with other Institutions, such as INMUJERES, has been a good practice for us, as it has helped us to deepen into the gender statistics. We have generated some gender surveys such as ENDIREH (violence against women), ENUT (time people spend on non-paid activities) and ELCOS (social corresponsibility).</p> <p>The Czech Statistical Office cooperate with resorts, with the Office of The Government of the CR and with many other institutions. We</p>	<p>What has worked well to overcome or mitigate the sensitivities of communicating gender stats?</p> <p>(Finland) besides publications and web pages we use also infographics, blogs, tweets etc. to support, explain and spread it. Also Facebook (mainly via Statistics Finland's page), LinkedIn and Instagram are used.</p> <p>(Chile) Together with the gender statistics (tables), the coefficient of variation of the estimators is also published, so that users can make correct use of the data based on their statistical accuracy.</p>	<p>What else is important for effective communication of gender stats? Keep it short!</p> <p>(Chile) Annually, we trained an average of 60 INE officials since 2015 with the aim of providing tools for them to use the gender approach in their daily work functions, based on the transmission of knowledge.</p> <p>Story telling.</p> <p>Data visualization!</p> <p>We need to make sure that data are not only produced but used- User Satisfaction Survey to assess users</p>

Figure 3: Screenshot of wiki-based brainstorming exercise #2

## 3. Findings from the brainstorming exercises

- These brainstorming exercises elicited many examples of good dissemination products. NSOs are increasingly using visualizations and infographics, including maps which can be used to tell geographical stories, allowing users to understand the statistics in terms that make sense to them through their own experiences where they live or work.
- Co-operation and liaison with stakeholders outside NSOs on these issues is very important, both to properly understand what data are required and to explain the statistics that are disseminated.
- Members of the Task Force reported that what has worked well to overcome the sensitivities of communicating gender statistics is to reach different types of users using different approaches. For example, information can be communicated using a layered approach – key points in infographics and graphics, summaries which are easy to read and then longer technical reports. While such layering and targeting is important across all statistical domains, it is especially important for gender statistics where users traverse the full spectrum

of statistical literacy levels. Also of critical importance is producing high quality press releases which are more likely to be taken up by journalists.

17. Other good practices which were mentioned included press conferences, use of social media platforms and infographics.

## **II. From Brainstorming to Work Plan**

18. Based on the above observations and guided by the terms of reference of the Task Force, the group developed a plan detailing the exact outputs to be produced and the timeline for producing them. The work plan was divided into several temporal streams and thematic work packages, and group members volunteered themselves to either lead or contribute to one or more work packages.

### **A. Planned outputs of the Task Force**

19. There was a strong feeling among the group that, in contrast to many other Task Forces established under the CES, this one should not aim to produce a traditional final report in printed form. Instead, since the target audience of the products will be primarily those working in communications in statistical offices (among others), the recommendations of this Task Force will be presented in a concise electronic format.

#### **1. First output: a set of electronic guidance notes**

20. The points raised by group members during the brainstorming exercise enabled the Task Force to identify six major thematic areas on which guidance would be helpful for those who produce and/or disseminate and communicate about gender statistics.
21. Each of these six guidance notes will follow a common format, using a template developed collectively by the group, and will be prepared using a common, visually appealing design with graphical and interactive elements capitalizing on the possibilities of electronic rather than paper format.
22. The themes agreed are:
  - i. Communicating about the Gender Pay Gap
  - ii. Communicating statistics on gender-based violence
  - iii. The language of gender in statistical communication
  - iv. Maintaining impartiality when communicating gender statistics
  - v. Interacting with users of gender statistics
  - vi. Addressing data gaps in gender statistics.

#### **2. Second output: an online repository of good practice examples**

23. In line with the terms of reference, the Task Force agreed that not only would it be necessary to include examples of good practice in the guidance notes themselves but that a repository of such examples should be collated and organized in a systematic way, enabling people to consult and learn from others' experiences. The repository will be a simple database-like

tool, using a common template that highlights key features, including the type of practice, the thematic area(s) to which it pertains, the challenges encountered and solutions identified, and sources to which a reader may be referred for more information.

#### Gender stereotypes in training advertisement

Created by Majuri Pietiläinen, last modified on 07 Feb, 2019



<b>Basic information:</b>	
<b>Country:</b>	Finland
<b>Organization:</b>	Statistics Finland
<b>Thematic area(s):</b>	Education
<b>Abstract:</b>	Our advertisement of our training for users "Change of work and gender equality". It was held in November 2018. Unfortunately the video clip is in Finnish but we will hopefully get a translated version next week. The video is about gender stereotypes. A woman visits a statistician at our office and she says "I have some feedback. What are you gonna do to your statistics? I am an engineer and I learn more than my husband. Why are you talking about how badly women are doing? etc." The statistician answers: "Do you see all these dots? Those all are individual experiences. Let's see how typical those are..." Then the statistician tells some facts based on statistics.
<a href="#">Back to top</a>	
<b>Good practice characteristics:</b>	
<a href="#">click to show</a>	
<b>Type of good practice:</b>	visualizations & infographics (electronic or paper)
<b>Objectives:</b>	The aim was to show the meaning of the gender aspect and how important it is to come to the training and understand more.
<b>Stakeholders:</b>	civil society   general public   government agencies   media
<b>Challenges and solutions:</b>	xxxx
<b>Success factors:</b>	Positive feedback. Widely seen. It is a new innovative way to advertise gender statistics training and it reached hugh amount of people. The training was also very successful.
<b>Impact:</b>	The clip was widely seen and liked at least in Twitter, Facebook and on our web site. The training was fully booked. We also got a lot of positive feedback. It was also eye-opening inside the NSO. This kind of video clip could be used for many other purposes too.
<a href="#">Back to top</a>	
<b>Further information:</b>	
<a href="#">click to show</a>	
<b>Link:</b>	<a href="https://urisan.esvalabs.com/?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.fi%2Ftup%2Foulutus%2Foulutus_tyonmuutos.html%23_ga%3D2.22972600.2084245265.1547639057-837959613.1474374334&amp;e=69db6cbe&amp;h=79f6967c&amp;fy&amp;p=y">https://urisan.esvalabs.com/?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.fi%2Ftup%2Foulutus%2Foulutus_tyonmuutos.html%23_ga%3D2.22972600.2084245265.1547639057-837959613.1474374334&amp;e=69db6cbe&amp;h=79f6967c&amp;fy&amp;p=y</a> <a href="https://urisan.esvalabs.com/?u=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FV-EKSG510E&amp;e=69db6cbe&amp;h=654205d9&amp;f=y&amp;p=y">https://urisan.esvalabs.com/?u=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FV-EKSG510E&amp;e=69db6cbe&amp;h=654205d9&amp;f=y&amp;p=y</a>
<b>Email address for contact by users of this database:</b>	tasa-avo.tilasto@stat.fi
<b>Notes:</b>	will be soon in English
<a href="#">Back to top</a>	

Figure 4: Screenshot of a sample entry in the good practices repository

### 3. Housing and maintaining the products

24. The guidance notes and repository of good practices will be hosted on the UNECE wiki, a collaborative online platform allowing easy entry and editing of information in the future. The Task Force will make recommendations for the maintenance of the content beyond the mandate of the group.

## III. Progress of the Task Force

25. One year into its two-year mandate, the Task Force now has drafts of the main textual elements of five of the six guidance notes prepared using an agreed template (the outstanding theme is 'maintaining impartiality' which will be drafted in due course).
26. The agreed format of the guidance notes contains brief sections on each of the following elements:
- i. Explanation of what the issue or challenge is
  - ii. Explanation of why it poses a particular challenge for gender statistics
  - iii. Recommendations

iv. Examples, including case studies, images and links.

27. The drafts are now being refined and will subsequently be incorporated into the designed guidance note format, as illustrated in figure 5.

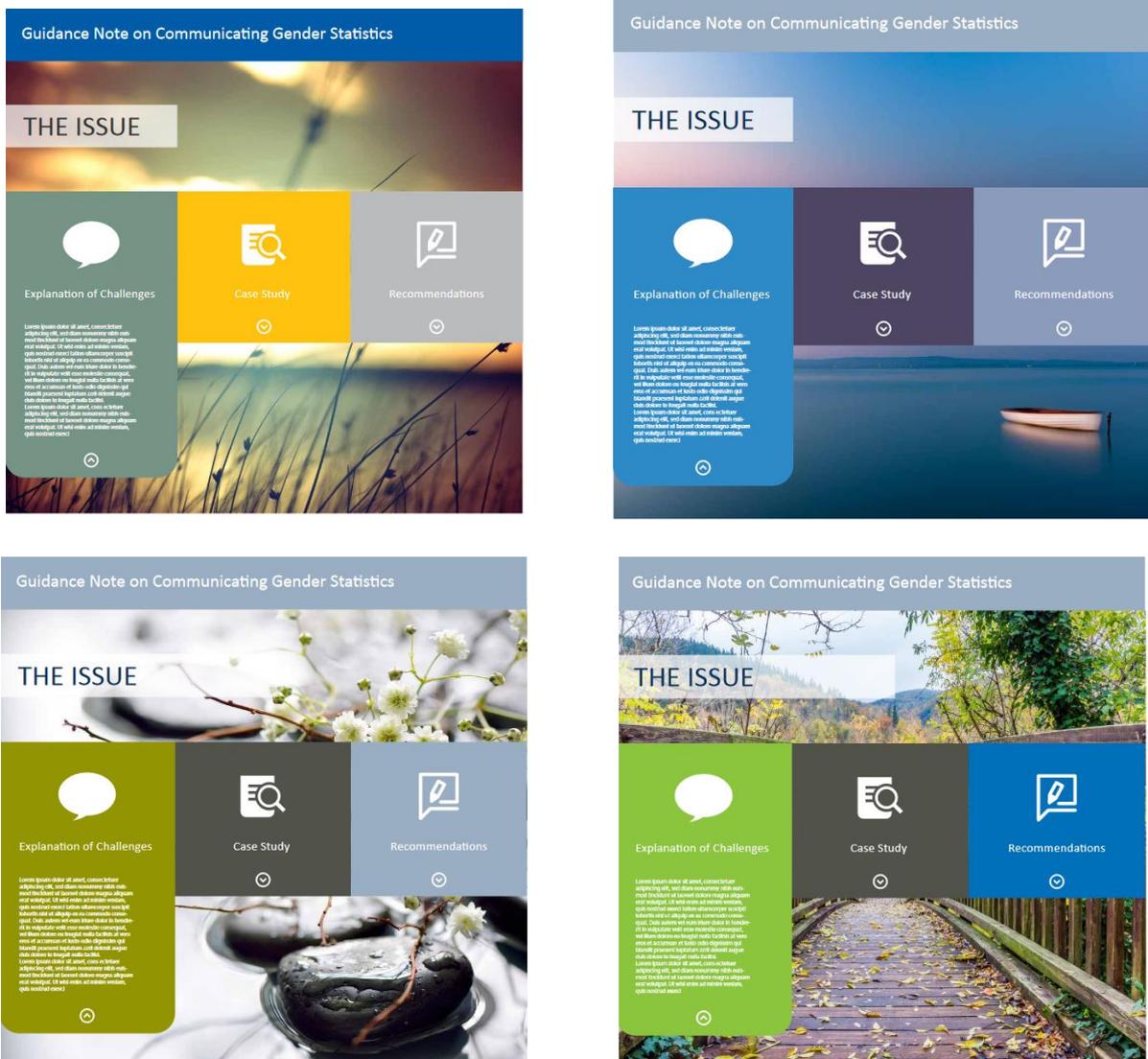


Figure 5: Mockups of designed guidance note template

28. The format and functionality of the good practice repository have been agreed by the Task Force and several examples have been submitted. Organizations outside of the Task Force are now also invited to submit their examples for consideration: they may do this at <http://bit.ly/genderstatsgoodpractices>.

## IV. Interim conclusions and next steps

29. While drafting the guidance notes some of the challenges noted were:
    - i. Decision makers in NSOs are not always convinced of the importance of producing gender statistics
    - ii. Some issues in gender statistics can be polarising or upsetting (e.g., gender-based violence)
    - iii. A gap can exist in understanding between data producers and policymakers which it is important to bridge
    - iv. There can be confusion among users of gender statistics about the difference between 'sex' and 'gender'.
  30. Some of the recommendations made during the drafting of the guidance notes are:
    - i. Tailor communication to a range of users
    - ii. Consider multiple platforms
    - iii. Represent data in a visual way (maps, charts, infographics)
    - iv. Use international definitions where possible
    - v. Highlight changes in methodology or context when publishing data.
  31. The next steps in this Task Force will be to review the draft guidance notes by all Task Force members between June and September 2019, incorporating feedback from this Work Session.
  32. The following steps will be taken during the final phase of this Task Force (between October 2019 and January 2020):
    - i. The good practices repository will be populated with examples; some will be used to illustrate points made in the guidance notes.
    - ii. The Task Force will agree a plan for curating the repository including maintaining it beyond the period of the Task Force's mandate.
    - iii. The guidance notes will be finalized and will be presented to the February 2020 CES Bureau meeting for final approval.
    - iv. In March 2020 the guidance notes will be revised based on any recommendations from the February 2020 CES Bureau meeting.
    - v. In April and May 2020 there will be electronic consultation among all CES member countries and revisions made as required.
    - vi. The set of guidance notes will be endorsed by the CES plenary meeting in June 2020 and then published on the UNECE wiki platform.
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