

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2023/2025 Bureau  
Cardiff, UK, 9-10 October 2023

Item II (c) of the Provisional  
Agenda

MAINTAINING RELEVANCE THROUGH PROVIDING PRODUCTS MEETING  
USER NEEDS

Prepared by the Secretariat

*The topic of maintaining relevance through providing products for meeting user needs was included on the list of topics for possible in-depth reviews and CES seminars consulted with CES members in January 2023. It received the third highest number of votes (23 votes) and eight countries offered contributions. In view of close links to the work undertaken under HLG-MOS, the Bureau asked to be informed about the relevant ongoing and completed work to decide if there are areas that are not covered and would need a review.*

*This document presents the overview of the HLG-MOS work related to maintaining relevance through providing products meeting user needs and makes a proposal for the way forward. **The Bureau took note of the completed activities and supported an in-depth review in this area as proposed.***

## I. BACKGROUND

1. Staying relevant is a primary concern of NSOs in a changing data landscape. The report on “*Measuring the value of official statistics*” endorsed by the Conference in 2022 emphasized that the value of official statistics is derived from responding to user needs and hence relies on knowing who users are and what their needs are.

2. Traditionally, a “pyramid” of users and their information needs was considered – from insights for the media and the general public to the most detailed data for the scientific community and analysts. However, the user community, their expectations and needs keep evolving, including the emergence of new user groups, e.g. data journalists or data bloggers who have very different needs than traditional media and “the general public”. To meet the needs of various user groups, the NSOs have started producing a much wider offering of statistical products and outputs – from raw data tables and APIs, through reports and press releases, to infographics or even podcasts.

3. While the new data sources, analysis methods and technologies hold great potential for statistical organizations to respond to the new user needs, the capabilities of statistical organizations to respond to them in an agile and flexible manner rely on many other factors too. For example, legislative and regulatory frameworks under which statistical organizations operate may limit their flexibility (e.g., access to new sources of data, legislative mandates limiting creating new products, etc.). Providing new products by adopting novel data sources and technologies also requires the integration of change management principles into the organizational frameworks. This involves **transitioning from a reactive approach to one characterized by proactivity and innovation** as well as moving beyond **simple assessment of user satisfaction to an open receptivity to user feedback and proactive research to anticipate evolving needs**. All of this should be done while adhering to the core principles and adapting to the ever-evolving

landscape. Such organizational capability to identify user groups, understand their needs and propose relevant statistical products may be especially important in new, rapidly growing topics.

4. The topic of maintaining relevance through providing products meeting user needs was included on the list of topics for possible in-depth reviews and CES seminars consulted with CES members in January 2023. It received the third highest number of votes (23 votes) and 8 countries offered contributions. In view of close links to the work undertaken under HLG-MOS, the Bureau asked to be informed about the relevant ongoing and completed work to decide if there are areas that are not covered and would need a review.

## II. RELEVANT WORK UNDER HLG-MOS

5. Delivering products aligned with user needs requires a holistic approach that incorporates user-centric perspectives throughout the entire production process. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) provides an overarching framework for such approach: statistical organizations first need to identify the new user need (new needs of the existing users as well as the needs of new users); after that, data products and services should be designed, produced and communicated according to the needs and requirements; finally, it should be evaluated if the products and services indeed meet the user demands which should be fed back into update of the existing programme or creation of new programme.

6. Developed by the HLG-MOS 2018-2019 Project, the *Strategic Communication Framework for Statistical Institutions*<sup>1</sup> supports statistical organizations to develop their communications strategy aligned with the values and principles that underpin official statistics. The framework also provides practical tools such as Communications Maturity Model<sup>2</sup> to map their current maturity level, identify areas for improvement and design action plans to reach the desired maturity level. The Internal Communications and Employee Engagement Maturity Model<sup>3</sup> can be used as a diagnostic tool to improve internal capabilities and engagement which are important for becoming a more agile organization responding to user needs.

7. Recognizing the importance of communicating contributions and distinctive qualities that make official statistics a trustworthy resource amidst the proliferation of alternative data sources and global misinformation, the HLG-MOS Task Team on Market Research, Digital Marketing and Communication Strategies developed the *Role of Brand Management, Marketing and Crisis Communication for Statistical Organisations*<sup>4</sup>. This publication offers essential guidance, tools, and strategies for crafting, promoting and preserving a strong brand, as well as compilation of best practices from statistical organizations during Covid pandemic.

8. The series of **Expert Meetings on Dissemination and Communication of Statistics organized under HLG-MOS**<sup>5</sup> have provided a platform for the experts to share innovations and new techniques in this field (e.g., podcasts, social media), and exchange experiences and lessons learned from facing the increasingly complex challenges in effectively disseminating and communicating data. The meetings cover topics related to communication such as market research, digital marketing, user-experience research, tracking customer engagement and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://unece.org/statistics/publications/strategic-communication-framework-statistical-institutions>

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/ECECESSTAT20211.pdf#page=16>

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/ECECESSTAT20211.pdf#page=92>

<sup>4</sup> <https://unece.org/statistics/news/branding-and-reputation-management-are-key-safeguarding-trust-official-statistics>

<sup>5</sup> <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/DIS/Expert+Meetings+and+Workshops>

satisfaction, user-focused communication with focus on identifying and leveraging the most effective channels. The **upcoming Expert Meetings on Dissemination and Communication of Statistics** (11-13 October 2023)<sup>6</sup> will enhance the collective knowledge in the field of communication by sharing concrete methods to measure the impact of communication strategies which used to be a particularly difficult aspect to tackle in the field.

### III. OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

9. Engaging and seeking feedback from users, whether existing or potential, plays a crucial role in maintaining relevance. It focuses on conveying the value and the way we communicate this value to our users and society at large when presenting our products. As mentioned above, the report on “*Measuring the value of official statistics: testing and developing a measurement framework*”<sup>7</sup>, endorsed by the CES in 2022, emphasized that the value of official statistics is derived from responding to user needs and hence relies on knowing who users are and what their needs are.

10. More recently, the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP) seminar (June 2023) delved into topics of opening and listening to users’ needs (establishing an “architecture of listening” in statistical organizations). The Statistical Information System – Collaboration Community (SIS-CC) is planning an activity on “User Research Task Force” for statistical organizations using the .Stat Suite for their dissemination. This will offer a valuable insights and knowledge into the usability tests and user profiles.

### IV. PROPOSAL TO THE BUREAU

11. While there have been a number of past and on-going activities exploring how to provide products that meet user needs, the efforts have been more focused on communication which is only one part of the story. Although the introduction of “experimental statistics” has given statistical organizations more flexibility to produce new types of products, the capability of many organizations to meet emerging user needs more quickly based on new data and methods remains limited.

12. Considering this and factors affecting organizational capabilities mentioned in section I of this note, the areas that could benefit from further review include:

**(a) Production process from user-centric view, in particular, on strategy and mechanisms in statistical organizations to reach out and engage with user groups including new, underrepresented or marginalized users.**

**(b) Organizational capability to improve the flexibility of the production environment and infrastructure, enabling proactive responses to both anticipated and unforeseen emerging needs.**

**13. The Bureau is invited to consider the proposals and decide on any possible further actions.**

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://unece.org/statistics/events/DissComm2023>

<sup>7</sup> [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/VOS\\_ReportforWeb\\_withCovers.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/VOS_ReportforWeb_withCovers.pdf)