

UN Network of Economic Statistics

Organizational Sprint

Workstreams on Collaboration and User Consultation, and Institutional Arrangements and Governance

Introduction

At its 52nd Session, the Statistical Commission provided the mandate for the establishment of the UN Network of Economic Statisticians with the intent in establishing an agile, collaborative and highly impactful approach for improving the responsiveness of the system of economic statistics to fast evolving policy demands. More specifically, the Network should facilitate better cooperation and networking among national statistical offices in developed and developing countries, facilitated by international and regional organizations. Better cooperation and networking, as reinforced in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, will enable national statistical offices to reimagine their business model, develop innovative strategies and adopt best practices in collaboration with other government agencies and the private sector, to produce trusted, timely and robust statistics catering to user demands. Moreover, the Network should facilitate better national data solutions provided by the global statistical infrastructure through partnership with the public sector, academia, private data holders and technology companies. Also, the Network should promote better working methods and aligned governance arrangements with the purpose of helping the system of economic statistics to operate as a coherent, collaborative, accountable and integrated system that is inclusive of the different actors involved. And finally, the Network should facilitate a better and more responsive system of economic statistics to measure our fast-evolving economies and enable us to experiment with the integration of the rapidly changing information demands of policymakers. The system of economic statistics should be better aimed at achieving improved granularity and timeliness, as well as better integration of the measures of economy, society and the environment to inform the universal 2030 Agenda and meeting the new requirements of the Secretary General's *Our Common Agenda*.

The recently released *Our Common Agenda*¹ makes explicit reference to the needs to take collective actions to meet the challenges of our time. An important aspect of this agenda is *to bring together Member States, international financial institutions and statistical, science and policy experts to identify a complement or complements to GDP that will measure inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity, building on the work of the Statistical Commission. In addition to identifying complementary measures, the process would also need to agree on pathways for national and global accounting systems to include additional measurements, and to establish systems for regular reporting as part of official statistics* (see paragraph 37 -39 for more details).

The Network is well placed to bring the SG Our Common Agenda and the recommendations of the Statistical Commission together in taking forward the expected outcomes mentioned above through the better networking for a user-centred approach and partnership in creating global data assets; better challenging the system through use cases in co-production and co-investment; better enabling the system through improved working methods among statistical groups; and better documenting the

¹ https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

international conceptual and practical guidance on methodological standards iteratively through regular experimentation and testing to meet rapidly evolving user demand. More specifically the Network should take forward the recommendations for an agile and more responsive system of economic statistics based on four thematic workstreams: (a) networking: collaboration and user consultation; (b) transforming and challenging the system: statistical infrastructure and operations, and data solutions; (c) enabling: institutional arrangements and governance; and (d) experimenting, integrating and documenting: statistical framework and methods

These workstreams should also address the lessons learned from our three rounds of global COVID surveys of National Statistical Offices that: a) low and lower-middle income countries are ready to engage with international partners to meet their emerging demands in the use of new data sources, methods, and technologies – but funding is a major impediment; and b) the majority of NSOs across all income groups expressed the need for co-investment in (i) the production of granular data through the linking of microdata from surveys and administrative sources through registers of people and businesses and the integration of statistical and geospatial data and (ii) the production of high frequency statistics and indicators through the use of big data for high frequency statistics².

Organizational Sprint

The objective of the **Organizational Sprint** is to develop the framework for how the thematic sprints will be conducted as a mechanism for collaboration and user consultation. This operational framework is expected to cover the timelines and structure (type and number of meetings) of sprints, their general aim, desired make up of sprint teams, and the overall roll out and expected progress of the sprints. In addition, this sprint will allow for consultation on the institutional arrangements, governance, and reporting of the UN Network of Economic Statisticians as reflected in the proposed Terms of Reference.

The specific outcomes of the **Organizational Sprint** are the identification of:

- First set of themes that are to be tackled by subsequent sprints
- Leads and composition of thematic sprints
- Guidance on sprint's duration and outcomes
- Set of principles for identifying sprint participants (countries)
- Reporting structure on sprints' progress and outcomes
- Consultative process and mechanisms for continuously identifying new areas requiring research via future sprints, including surveys of statistical committees and user forums
- Working and governance arrangements for the Network, including the Bureau, and its continuous renewal, as established sprints complete their work and new ones begin

Although the **Organizational Sprint** is expected to complete its work in the quarter 4 of 2021 and quarter 1 of 2022 through various sprint sessions, just as other thematic sprints begin theirs, it is possible that some of its work may need to be revisited when lessons learned from the thematic sprints

² Survey of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) during COVID-19, conducted by World Bank and the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), in coordination with the five UN Regional Commissions. (see <https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/statistical-programmes/covid19-nso-survey/>). Overall, 149 NSOs (76 percent) participated in at least one round of the three rounds of the survey in 2020.

need to be incorporated or to prepare the Work Plan for the year to come. It has also been suggested that the Organizational Sprint may assess the reports of economic statistics related domains to the Statistical Commission from various Committees and Expert groups. This assessment should provide a synthesis of the reports to the Commission for specific considerations such as avoiding overlaps, promoting networking on common themes, aligning work programmes, setting priorities, and converging on terminology and governance. This synthesis report will also reflect on the priorities of regional economic organization as part of the Network's regional outreach program expected to take place in quarter 4 of 2021.

The decision to update the **Organizational Sprint**'s initial framework will rest with the Bureau.

This Sprint will take place on-line for which mainly the previous members of the participating agencies of the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics will be invited. .