



**Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals,  
"Informal meeting on measuring progress"  
New York, 17 December 2013**

**How can statistics assist in the design of  
the SDGs and post-2015 goals and targets?**

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# Towards the post-2015 development agenda

2012: Rio+20 Conference Outcome document mandated the Open Working Group to prepare a proposal on SDGs

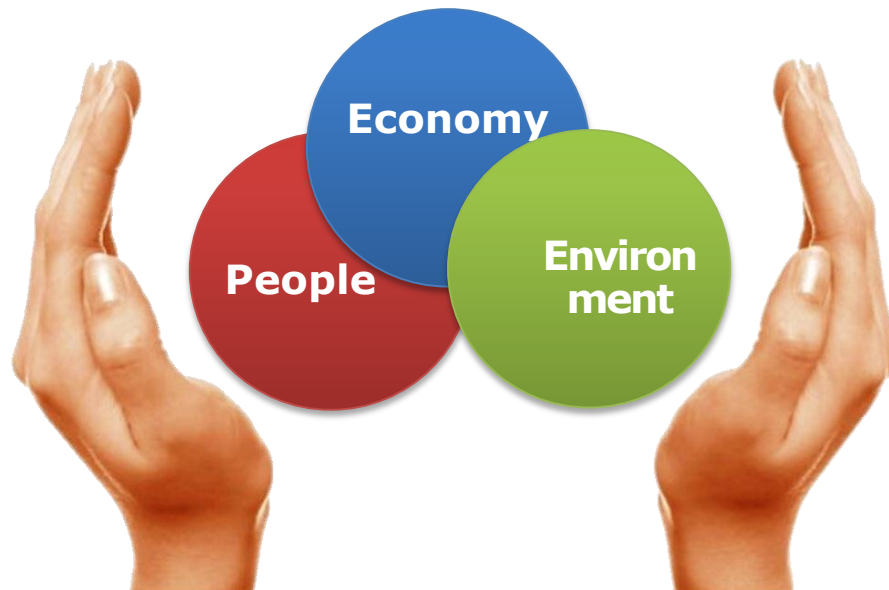
2010: MDG summit requested Sec Gen to think about the global development agenda post-2015

→ Global development agenda beyond 2015 with sustainable development at its core



# 2013 HLP report

*....these five fundamental shifts can remove the barriers that hold people back, and end the inequality of opportunity that blights the lives of so many people on our planet. They can, at long last, bring together social, economic and environmental issues in a coherent, effective, and sustainable way (= Rio +20).*



## Goals to be monitored

*....an independent and rigorous monitoring system, with regular opportunities to report on progress and shortcomings at a high political level.*

*...goals, targets and indicators - Open Working Group*



Where do we come from, what progress have we made, where should we be going to and how should we know about all this?

# Knowledge / Evidence for Decisions

- Power/knowledge: power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and truth (Foucault, 1991)
- Can be produced and used in different ways
- Evidence based decision making.



# Evidence Based Decision Making Opportunities

- Transparency
- Trust – Accountability
- Participation
- As forms of knowledge, indicators:
  - provide a transition from ambiguity to certainty, from theory to fact, from complex variation and context to truthful, comparable numbers
  - present the most important features relevant to informed decision-making
  - should inspire those who are measured to perform better and improve (Sally Engle Merry, 2011).

# Evidence Based Decision Making Threats

- Technocratic dominance
- Insufficient quality, non-measurability
- What can go wrong? Goodhart's Law:
  - On the decision side: decisions influenced by availability, quality and design of evidence; evidence focussed decision making
  - On the evidence side: decision based evidence making
  - On both sides: insufficient evidence and partisan decision making interact (Sally Engle Merry, 2011).

# Calling-in Official Statistics

- Indicators are measures derived from primary and secondary statistical data
- Official Statistics - 'with authority' – NSIs
- Official Statistics are integral part of the knowledge to monitor functioning of modern societies
- Evolution of Official Statistics: from first data for administration and taxes towards data on the populations themselves with the development of modern states – expansion to other domains – improvements in methodology
- Official Statistics in governance (Porter, 1995).



# Official Statistics - strengths

- Long experience
- Consistency over time and place
- Common ethical code & concepts of quality (F Principles)
- Global network
- Established and agreed common standards & frameworks
- Existing communication with users
- Existing infrastructures (national, regional, global...)
- Indicators replace judgments based on values or politics
- Independence.

# Official Statistics - weaknesses

- Slow in delivering results
- Traditional methods
- Static, not quickly responding to new situations
- Costly (surveys....)
- Limitations (and what to do in the unfavourable case ?).

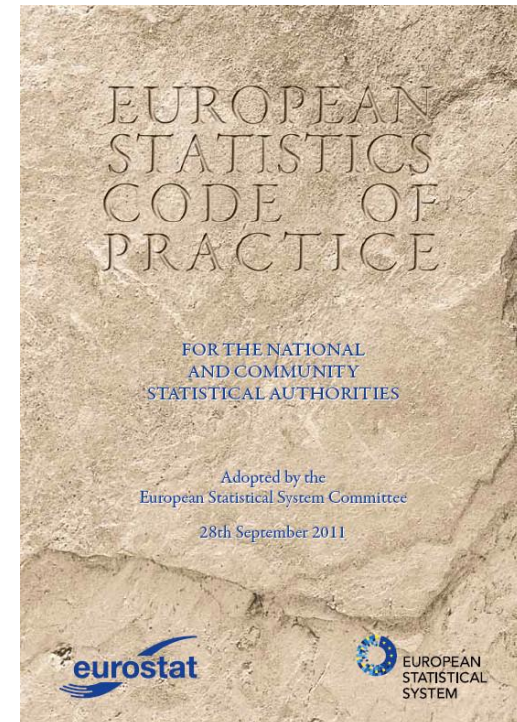
# Official Statistics - QUALITY

Example: European Statistics  
Code of Practice

- 15 principles

3 dimensions:

- Statistical outputs
- Statistical processes
- Institutional environment



# Potential contribution Official Statistics to SDGs/post-2015

- Ensure measurability
- NSDS – NSIs as reference point and centre
- Certified evidence – quality - survives scrutinisation
- Existing structures – national, regional, global
- Continuous national capacity building + ownership
- Existing global standards and frameworks (NA, SEEA...)
- Readiness to examine how to constantly improve
- Constant dialogue with users.

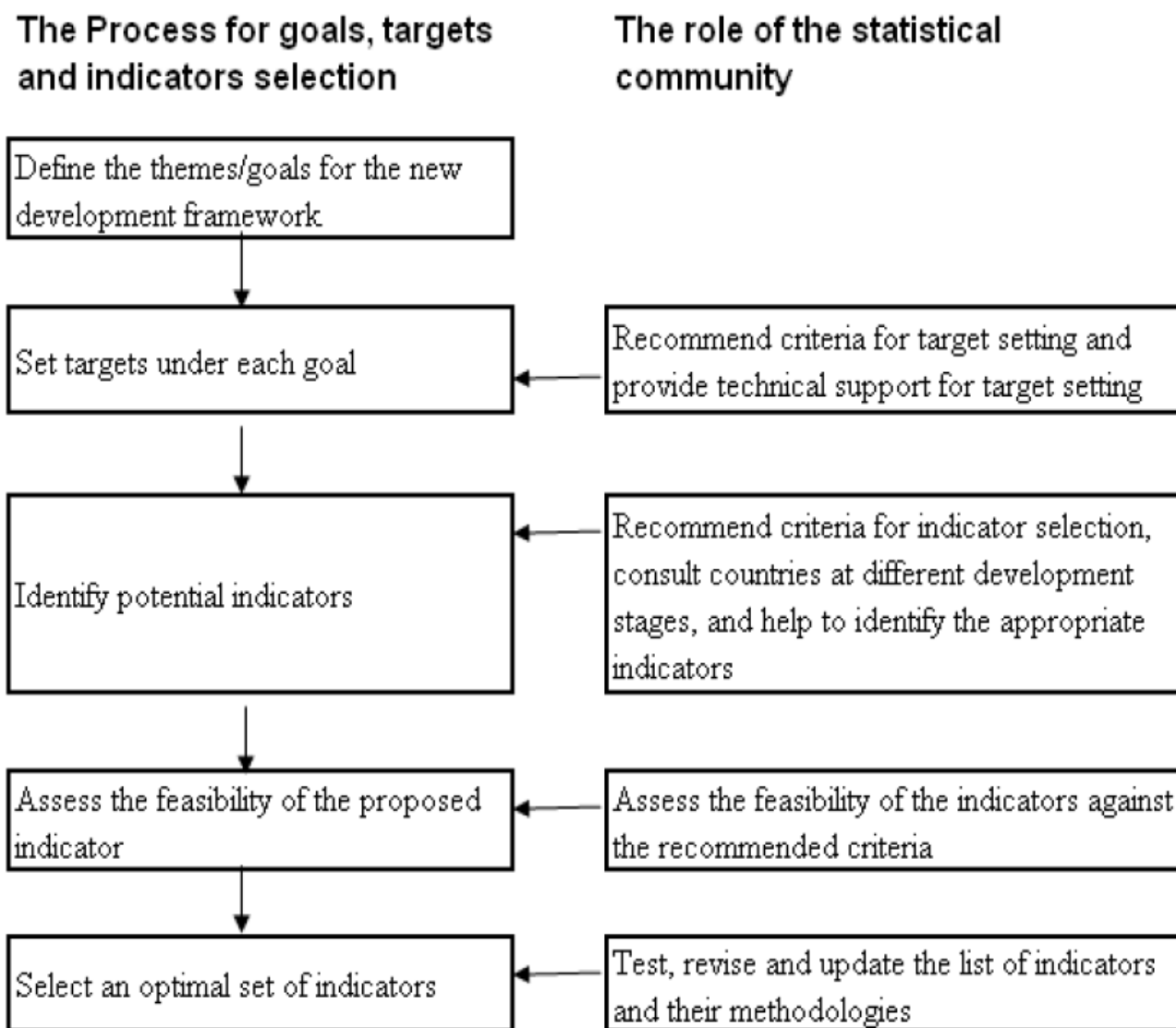
# Moving forward

- Constant dialogue needed between OWG and Official Statistics in the process of target and indicator setting
- Data (r)evolution: building together on what we have and improving through using new technologies
- Forming a new global statistical partnership by building on existing structures and partnerships
- Building national capacity and ownership
- Strengthening the institution for Official Statistics worldwide.

**Worldstat:** *focusing on implementing agreed standards and improving the capabilities for developing, archiving and interpreting data, particularly in the developing world.*

(Martin Rees, 2013)

**Figure 1:** The role of statistical community in the process for goals, targets and indicator selection





# Thank you for your attention!

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