

Summary report
Second Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of
Economic Statisticians

Virtual Meeting, 24 November 2021

Introduction

1. The Second (Virtual) Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians (Network) was organized on 24 November 2021 to seek agreement on the terms of reference of the Network. It also aimed to initiate a discussion on the modalities of user consultations, including country consultations through national, regional, and global user seminar/forums, consultations with statistical bodies under the Statistical Commission, and other statistical agencies such as Eurostat, IMF, OECD, and the World Bank. Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and Assistant Chief Statistician from Canada, Mr. Greg Peterson co-chaired the meeting, which was attended by around 40 participants from countries and international and regional organizations.
2. Mr. Schweinfest and Mr. Peterson provided the opening remarks. Mr. Schweinfest outlined the agenda for the meeting and highlighted the importance of consulting and engaging users from countries, regional and international organizations to secure their support for the activities of the Network. Mr. Peterson agreed with the importance of user consultation and also highlighted the sprint mechanism as an organizational innovative feature of the Network. Participants were invited to provide written comments on the draft summary of the first organizational meeting over the next three days, after which the final copy would be made available on the meeting website.
3. The following is a summary of the discussions and the conclusions.

Summary report

Terms of Reference for the Network

4. Ms. Daniela Ravindra of Statistics Canada presented the revised draft of term of reference of the Network, which had incorporated the written comments which were provided before meeting.
5. Participants broadly agreed with the revised terms of reference of the Network and the proposals to refine the terms of reference to indicate that the Network should actively engage and network with the chairs of existing economic statistics groups to discuss and collate their ongoing work and plans to identify emerging themes and gaps and avoid duplication. They also supported the proposal for the Statistics Division to coordinate with the regional commissions to identify high-level economic statisticians from the national statistical systems of the respective regions to contribute to the work of the Network as thought leaders.

Action: Participants will provide more written comments on the terms of reference to UNSD by 22 November 2021. UNSD will coordinate with the regional commissions to identify and invite high-level economic statisticians from the respective regions to join the Network.

User consultation

6. Mr. Peterson initiated the discussion on the modalities of user consultations, including the country consultations through national, regional, and global user seminar/forums, and the consultations with statistical bodies under the Statistical Commission and other statistical agencies such as Eurostat, IMF, OECD, and World Bank. These various modalities of user consultation should allow for the determination of the priorities of the rolling annual work programme of the Network. In addition, Mr. Michael Stanger, Interregional Regional Advisor, UNSD, shared the lessons learned from the regional outreach and user consultation meetings, which were organized as part of the outreach programme for the update of the 2008 SNA. The scope of this regional outreach program could be broadened to other areas of economic statistics. Moreover, this programme not only covers the conceptual development of economic statistics standards but also practices and capacity building for the early implementation of the standards based on countries priorities.
7. Participants agreed with the initial proposals on the modalities of user consultations, including the proposal to organize an annual Global Forum on Economic Statistics complementing the present practices of quarterly regional outreach seminars organized in consultation with the regional commissions and the global consultations of guidance notes by the AEG/ISWGNA. However, they noted that there is a need to agree on the details of the Global Forum to be organized by the Network such as the duration of the meeting, the scope of the topics, the number and level of representation of the participants, etc.
8. Further reflecting on the annual Global Forum, the following was noted. The Forum could be considered a “North Star” for the Network in bringing together the outcomes of the Network’s Sprints, the quarterly regional consultations, and the consultations of the statistical groups. Moreover, it would provide an opportunity to deliver on a Network of Networks building on existing networks of data scientists and data analysts of the national and regional data centers, the network of economic demographers, etc. Also, the existing statistical groups should be mobilized to synthesize what are the next priorities for a shared global program on economic statistics. It was agreed that the organization of the Global Forum has to be an inclusive process that builds on regional diversity and perspectives. This inclusive nature of the Forum could also allow for a series of seminars and webinars in addition to the Network Sprints, which can be referred to as “the Road to ...”.

Action: Statistics Canada, Eurostat, and UNSD with support of UKONS and BEA will elaborate on the modalities of the Global Forum and provide an update at the third meeting of the organizational sprint.

Branding/communications strategy for the Network

9. Mr. Peterson initiated the discussion on the need to develop a branding and communications strategy to promote the activities of the Network. Mr. Ivo Havinga, independent expert, proposed an overview of this strategy comprising the following four components:
 - Coordinated programmes, practices and working methods (through better networking and organization)
 - Pivot to integrated statistics (through better statistical methods and framework)
 - Data collection and access, and experimental estimates (through better data and data solutions)
 - UN global and regional forums, and surveys (through user better consultation, communication, and partnerships)

10. Participants supported the need to develop a branding and communications strategy to promote the activities of the Network to network, engage, transform, and challenge the system of economic statistics and agreed to continue discussing this topic at the third organizational meeting.

Next steps

11. Participants were updated on the status of the preparation of the first report of the Network to the 53rd session of the Statistical Commission, which would be circulated to them for comments after the meeting.
12. Participants agreed to organize the third meeting of the Organizational Sprint on 15 December 2021 to finalize the discussions on user consultations and identify the next steps, continue the discussion on the branding and communications strategy, and initiate the discussion on a two-year rolling workplan for the Network to be considered in the fourth meeting of the Sprint. They also agreed with the proposal to organize the fourth and final virtual meeting of the Organizational Sprint on 12 January 2022. This final meeting will seek agreement on the main elements of a two-year rolling workplan for the Network

Action: UNSD will circulate draft copy of first report of Network to the 53rd Statistical Commission to the members to provide their written comments by 29 November 2021. UNSD will also send invitations for the 15 December 2021 meeting, and share the revised terms of reference, summary of the second meeting and agenda for the third meeting.