

Summary Report
Third Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of
Economic Statisticians

Virtual Meeting, 15 December 2021

Introduction

1. The Third (Virtual) Organizational Sprint Meeting of the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians (Network) was organized on 15 December 2021 to finalize the discussion on user consultations and identify the next steps, continue the discussion on the branding and communications strategy and develop a two-year rolling workplan for the Network to be considered in the fourth meeting of the Sprint. 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 30 participants from countries and international and regional organizations.
2. Mr. Schweinfest and Mr. Peterson provided the opening remarks. Mr. Schweinfest informed participants that he had contacted the regional commissions to identify senior economic statisticians from their respective regions to join the Network as thought leaders. After that, UNSD will discuss the proposed candidate members with the regional commissions and members of the Network before UNSD invites them to join the Network, so that the co-chairs of the Network can be confirmed by the fourth meeting of the Organizational Sprint.
3. Mr. Schweinfest also noted that the summary report of the second meeting and the terms of reference of the Network (subject to the endorsement of the Statistical Commission) would be considered final unless there were more written comments from members. Nevertheless, the Network can review the relevance of its terms of reference in future.
4. Mr. Peterson lauded the tremendous progress that has been made in the past two meetings to brainstorm ideas to transform the system of economic statistics and outlines the items on the agenda for the meeting.
5. The following is a summary of the discussions and the conclusions.

User consultation

6. Mr. Frantisek Bernadic of Eurostat elaborated on the proposal to organize a two- or three-day Global Forum on Economic Statistics in late 2022 for the producers and high-level users of economic statistics to discuss the impact of the various recommendations which will be included in the updated SNA and BPM. The Forum will be organized in a face-to-face format in either Brussels or Luxembourg.
7. It was agreed that the Forum can be considered as a “North Star” in gathering feedback on the needs of users in the updated SNA and BPM as well as setting the next priorities for a shared global program on economic statistics based on feedback and consultation from existing statistical groups and committees of experts, the diverse views of regional users gathered through quarterly outreach webinars/seminars, and the various Sprints on organizational issues, data access, beyond GDP, and communication.

8. There was broad support for the Global Forum and the proposal to organize a prior series of webinars to complement the Global Forum (for example, by highlighting the key recommendations of the updated SNA and BPM and exploring new research priorities for economic statistics with key users for their views before the Forum) and to develop targeted messages for various groups of users such as the classical users (e.g. economists), media, business associations, etc. In addition, participants agreed that the AEG/ISWGNA and BOPCOM should be informed regarding the proposal to organize the Global Forum.
9. Further, participants supported the proposal to undertake a comprehensive and holistic review of the Statistical Commission reports which are related to economic statistics, after which a synthesis report highlighting the priorities and gaps which can be addressed by the Network will be produced.

Action: The Bureau will coordinate with Eurostat to prepare a concept note for the Global Forum for discussion at the next meeting of the organizational sprint. The Bureau will prepare an outline of the synthesis report for discussion at the next meeting.

Branding/communications strategy for the Network

10. Mr, Ivo Havinga, independent expert, gave a presentation elaborating on the elements of a branding and communications strategy (including purpose and objectives, communication principles, target audiences and mechanisms and activities) to promote the activities of the Network. Participants supported the proposal and suggested that the Network can complement rather than duplicate the work of existing groups on the communication and branding of economic statistics by identifying user needs and gaps and then establishing Communication Sprints to address these gaps agilely. These Sprints could mobilize the expertise of the external communication departments of national statistical offices and their recent experience in statistical reporting on the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

Workplan for the Network

11. Mr, Peterson outlined the proposed themes for the rolling two-year workplan. These included aspects of the digital economy including intangibles, informal economy, linkages to skills and the digital divide; Beyond GDP agenda related to inclusive growth and wealth, new capitals, distributions, and linkages to the changing socio-demographics and well-being of society and persons; and co-investment in getting facilitating access to privately held data and real time granular data sets. This workplan should not only facilitate coordination among existing statistical groups and committees of experts but also partnership with other networks such as of socio- demographic statisticians and economists and of environmental statisticians and economists.
12. Participants supported the proposed themes and also proposed other themes such as tracking the vulnerability of value chains in the face of exogenous shocks such as COVID-19, provision of guidance to users in highly globalized economies on how to interpret key macroeconomic aggregates such as GDP; and the linkages between the environmental accounts and economic statistics.
13. Mr. Richard Heys, UK ONS, and Ms. Lianne Ippel, Statistics Netherlands, provided updates on the progress of the work of the Beyond GDP and Data Access Sprints, respectively. Both noted the dates of the meetings of the two thematic sprints in 2022. Participants appreciated the progress that both Sprints have made in their work. Also, participants were requested to indicate if they would like to participate in the thematic sprints after the meeting.

Action: Participants will provide written comments on the proposed themes for the workplan of the Network and indicate if they would like to participate in and contribute in organizing the Data Access and Beyond GDP sprints to UNSD by **15 January 2022**.

Next steps

14. Participants were informed that first report of the Network to the 53rd session of the Statistical Commission had been submitted for formal editing and translation. The background document will be prepared next which will report on the outcomes of the Organizational Sprint, Beyond GDP Sprint, and the Data Access Sprint
15. Participants agreed to organize the fourth and final virtual meeting of the Organizational Sprint to seek agreement on the main elements of a two-year rolling workplan for the Network. The date of the fourth meeting will be communicated in January.

Action: UNSD will send the invitation and agenda for the fourth meeting and share the summary of the third meeting for comments.