

# Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics

## TERMS OF REFERENCE Project team on Digital Standards

### Background

The Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics (FOC Group) has recognised the need for statistical groups to work more collaboratively by applying a network approach that brings together multidisciplinary project teams to address specific methodological and institutional challenges. These challenges should mobilize the power of networking among the statistical groups functioning under UN and non-UN organisations and across the economic, social and environmental spheres. It is expected that a network approach will lead to new working methods and innovative methodological and institutional solutions through shared communication, priorities, membership and user consultation. This approach should also lead to more effective coordination and alignment between statistical groups without adding any additional governance groups or hierarchies.

The FOC Group aims to address these challenges through the better use of technology for communicating; more iterative approach to producing outputs; opening membership; and finding new ways of balancing challenges of continuity with innovation. The network would also serve a function in sharing best practices and results from experimentation between existing activities.

Ultimately, the project teams should demonstrate new working methods that make the system of economic statistics responsive to fast-changing user demand, enhance synergies between the groups, and avoid duplication of work.

### Purpose

The project team on digital standards will focus on advancing the use of innovative technology for cross referencing and navigation between the manuals in support of the research on the update of these manuals as part of the update of the system of economic statistics.

The serviceability of the economic statistics manuals is hampered by the absence of digital cross reference that facilitate the navigation from one part of the system to the other. The digital versions of the manuals with cross-references embedded will be an important step. Moreover, the service from, access to, and navigation through the system are hindered by the presence of frequent overlapping areas across handbooks. For the sake of clarity in the interrelations across the system, and to facilitate the implementation of navigation solutions, a concentric, overlap-free design for the distribution of methodological content is preferred, where the fundamental building blocks are all contained in a central body, and other manuals only cover very specific extensions avoiding any kind of duplication.

Both the development of interlinked digital versions of the manuals and the establishment of a concentric network model for the manuals would contribute to the update of the manuals and the diffusion of methodological knowledge. Moreover, the establishment of collaborative digital platform is warranted to support the discussion, exchange of ideas and confrontation of approaches on methodological issues. Such environments should be used to contribute to the

development of the research(s) agenda(s) and to assist in the drafting of handbooks or guidance material, in a more inclusive way than possible currently.

This project should build on ongoing efforts by Eurostat, the ECB, the IMF and UNSD. This project also uses the advice of ECB provided during the global consultation undertaken by the FOC Group on Economic Statistics on setting global priorities on new working methods.

## Approach

This work will be initiated through the creation of a network of international agencies like Eurostat, ECB, IMF and UNSD to jointly undertake the use of innovative technology for the update of the system of economic statistics. Joining the network would be voluntary and inclusive. Activities of the network would focus on designated outputs and outcomes with specified time frames.

## Deliverables / Time Schedule

The project will be responsible for developing **formal guidance notes** on:

1. digital cross-referencing to allow for easy navigation across the manuals
2. network or concentric topology for the system of manuals to avoid overlaps and conflicts between the various methodological prescriptions to facilitate the drafting of manuals.
3. a UN platform as a collaborative environment (such as wiki applications) to support the statistical update of the system of economic statistics, exchange of information, innovative ideas and general knowledge across a target population of experts, professionals or the public at large.

The guidance notes would outline the issues being addressed, summarize existing research/ agency practices, consider various technological options, develop a consensus recommendation and a road map for addressing the digital standards in support of the update of the system of economic statistics.

In addition, the team members will be asked to report on the successes and challenges of the network approach and on the innovative working methods and agile solutions used inside the network.

- A status update report will be submitted for the fourth meeting of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics in **October/November 2020**
- The final guidance note should be ready for the final report of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics to be submitted for the Fifty-Second Session of the Statistical Commission in **March 2021**.
- A report providing an assessment of the network approach and of the working arrangements used for the team project will be prepared for the final report of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics to be submitted for the Fifty-Second Session of the Statistical Commission in **March 2021**.

## Communications and reporting

The Project team on digital standards will report directly to the Chair of the FOC Group on Economic Statistics.

## Membership

*International organisations*

Name	Title	Organisation

*External (from academia, research institutes)*

Name	Title		Company	Location

## Chair, secretariat and meetings

The Chair of the project team will be **XXX** and the secretariat will be provided by UNSD. The Group is expected to be arranged as required.