

Third meeting of the FOC Group on Economic Statistics

Sunday, 1 March, UN Headquarters, New York

Draft Concept Note
prepared by Eurostat

UN GLOBAL FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF ECONOMIC STATISTICS

1. Purpose and scope

The Friends of the Chair Group on economic statistics (FoC Group) was created by the 50th Session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2019 to undertake an assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of the current system of economic statistics to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

One of the proposed work dimensions for the FoC Group in 2020, its second and last year of activity, aims at increasing the engagement with a broad range of users and other potential partners, including technology partners, data providers and academics to set the global priorities for the update of the system of economic statistics, which measures the interrelationships between the economy, society and environment. A key element of this engagement and communication strategy is the organization of a UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics in late 2020.

This UN Forum would look at user needs from the perspective of economic growth as well as its environmental and social impacts including issues of inequality. It is expected that the presentations and discussions at the Forum will shed more light on users' requirements both for short-term perspective and for the longer-term global mega trends in climate change and environmental sustainability, the green economy, technological and digital transformation, socio-demographic trends, urbanization and inequalities. This would provide useful exchanges and feedback supporting statisticians in addressing these challenges by setting global priorities for the update of the system of economic statistics. This update should improve the statistical products and services in response to user needs in a better, more proactive and more agile manner.

The Forum would bring together high-level users, partners and producers of economic statistics from different regions of the world, creating an opportunity for dialogue on strategic issues between the different communities. Users and other partners are expected to increase their awareness of the already existing offer of economic statistics, in terms of its breadth, timeliness and level of detail, and of plans to improve it. Technology partners and data providers are expected to bring their experience and capacity to support the production of official statistics in meeting the user demands. Producers of official statistics are expected to gather input to enhance the offer of economic statistics, for further reflection and discussion at the 52nd UN Statistical Commission in 2021.

2. Time, location, participants

This UN Global Forum event will be hosted by Eurostat at the end of November or early December in Brussels, Belgium.

The Forum would gather around 200-250 participants, including:

- a) High-level policymakers and other users of economic statistics, e.g. the USG of DESA, UN Chief Economist, Ministers of Finance, Economy and Development, representatives of the European Commission, high-level academics, while ensuring a broad geographical representation;
- b) High-level representatives of potential technology partners and data providers;
- c) Directors General, Presidents or Chief Statisticians of National Statistical Institutes;
- d) Directors General or Directors of international, regional and supra-national organizations including UN, IMF, World bank, OECD, Eurostat, ECB, regional development banks, etc.

3. Format and content

The Forum would take place over two full days. The whole event would be in plenary. It could be structured in four major themes. Each session would be introduced with a keynote speech, followed by an extensive structured plenary discussion.

Possible topics (preliminary titles and annotations):

1. Enhancing statistics for economy, sustainability and wellbeing

The FoC Group recognized the need to expand the measurement of wellbeing and sustainability areas and reinforce the links of economic activity with environmental and societal impacts, including issues of inequality.

This session would collect users' views on areas of wellbeing and sustainability that are linked to economic statistics in order to identify priority domains that would deserve further specific statistical development actions.

2. Innovating statistical production through new data sources and partnerships

The FoC Group identified a need to produce more detailed data and add more granularity to the various international classifications. Achieving the requested level of information through the traditional survey approach would be very costly and would not be feasible.

This session would allow to exchange on how user needs for granular data could be satisfied, in particular looking at solutions that require the cooperation between official statistics and technology and data partners, addressing the confidentiality challenge that comes with the request of more detailed information, and considering implementation aspects.

3. Strengthening user engagement and communication on economic statistics

The FoC Group identified the need to enhance communication on economic statistics.

This session would serve to discuss ways to make economic statistics more responsive, understandable and accessible to different kinds of users. The session would also discuss the best channels for a regular two-way communication between users and producers of economic statistics.

4. The role of the System of National Accounts (SNA)

The SNA is the international statistical standard for national accounts, providing a well-established conceptual framework for policymaking and economic analysis. The SNA is regularly updated to take into account emerging economic features.

This session would provide an opportunity to clarify the role of the SNA in the context of the future of economic statistics, to discuss the ongoing work and collect user input in view of the future update of the SNA, and address the issue of implementation capacity in the different statistical systems.

4. Consideration from members of the FOC Group:

The FOC Group is invited to:

reflect on the note for the First UN Forum on Economic Statistics and request Eurostat, UNSD and the Chair of the FOC Group to initiate the preparations for the UN Forum on Economic Statistics including a save the date announcement.