



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**With the support of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**

**Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation**  
18-19 November 2021, Geneva

INF.1  
3 May 2021

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

*The UNECE Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation will take place on 18-19 November 2021. Depending on the Covid-19 situation, the meeting will be fully online or online with a possibility of physical participation in Geneva.*

*The possibility of physical participation in the meeting and availability of English-Russian interpretation will be confirmed closer to the date on the meeting website. The information, the meeting timetable and all other documents related to the meeting will be posted on the meeting website: <https://unece.org/statistics/events/expert-meeting-modernizing-statistical-legislation-0>.*

### **I. Background**

Improving the governance of statistical production and the legal framework is fundamental to producing high-quality statistics and a priority for many countries. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) has been supporting its members in this area by developing and endorsing, together with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Eurostat, the *Generic Law on Official Statistics* (2016) and the *Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation* (2019). Aligning with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the documents provide guidance on developing the statistical legislation needed to support the modernization of statistical systems and unleash the full value of official statistics. When endorsing the *Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation*, the Conference agreed that regular meetings of legal and managerial experts should be organized to continue working on this topic.

The present meeting will be the second UNECE Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation. The target audience of the meeting are experts from national statistical offices and international organizations interested in strengthening the legal framework of official statistics and legal aspects of data access, ethics, governance and stewardship. The Expert Meeting is open to all countries and international organizations.

The Expert Meeting is organized by a committee consisting of the United Kingdom (chair), Albania, Armenia, Latvia, Poland, Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The meeting is supported by the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

## II. Format and language

Depending on the Covid-19 situation, the meeting will be fully online or online with a possibility of physical participation in Geneva. The possibility of physical participation in the meeting and availability of English-Russian interpretation will be confirmed closer to the date. The information will be posted on the meeting website: <https://unece.org/statistics/events/expert-meeting-modernizing-statistical-legislation-0>.

The meeting will consist of four sessions. The sessions will include presentations from country representatives, international organizations and academia, and discussions. Participants will have the opportunity to raise questions and actively participate in the discussion. Each session will be concluded by its chair with a summary of the main outcomes.

## III. Objectives

The objectives of the Expert Meeting are to:

- Provide a platform for national and international experts to share experience and best practices in the modernization of legal and institutional frameworks of official statistics
- Discuss emerging issues posing legal challenges to national statistical systems
- Gather information about the use of *CES Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation* and the *Generic Law on Official Statistics* in reviewing national statistical laws and other related legislation, and about emerging issues and good practices for future revisions
- Identify what other supporting materials and practical guidance are needed to strengthen statistical legislation and implement it effectively.

## IV. Call for contributions

**All countries and organizations are invited to contribute papers and presentations on the topics of the meeting (see section V).**

**Please communicate your interest to contribute to the secretariat ([cwiek@un.org](mailto:cwiek@un.org)) by 28 May, describing in 2-3 sentences the planned content of your contribution.**

### Papers

#### **Submission deadline: 3 September**

Papers should be written in English and include a summary on the first page. All papers will be published on the meeting website. The Organizing Committee will select the papers to be presented and discussed during the session and inform the authors.

### Presentations

Countries or organizations who would like to present their experience related to the meeting topics but are not in a position to prepare a paper can also express interest by 28 May. The Organizing Committee will select the experiences to be presented and inform the authors.

## V. Topics of the Expert Meeting

### Topic 1: Access to privately held data

#### Session organizer: Latvia

Access to privately held data remains a topic of profound interest, and there are many success stories concerning access to such data. However, it is less known to what extent the legislation behind these success stories has boosted the innovative data sharing practices between business and government. Can the legislation be the ultimate tool for breaking down the silos of data producers (national statistical offices) and data owners (data subjects)? This session will aim to identify legal rules, principles, practices, or even cultural specificities that have played a crucial role in these success stories. When it comes to international data sharing, different legislative regimes appear to be obstacles in the data sharing economy. Is it possible to foster a data sharing ecosystem that opens opportunities for more trusted collaboration and the common good?

This session will continue to explore different aspects and experiences of accessing privately held data and investigate international data sharing possibilities.

### Topic 2: Data governance and stewardship from a regulatory perspective

#### Session organizer: Eurostat

The data revolution and digitalization have changed the way that private companies as well as governments and individuals operate and engage with other actors in their ecosystems. This has led to the generation of vast amounts of data and the need to ensure that it is properly interpreted and used but also that all the necessary safeguards are in place for its safe treatment. Harnessing these data can create more value for society. The success of these activities depends on the existence of organizations and of teams in organizations that are empowered to proactively initiate, facilitate and coordinate data collaboratives. These data stewards systematize the process of partnering and support scaling of efforts for additional value creation.

With their solid data management expertise and commitment to data protection and confidentiality that are enshrined both in law and their culture, statistical offices are uniquely positioned to proactively assist both public and private actors to harness this data with the goal of creating efficiencies and benefits for society. Sound and transparent methodologies and processes are especially important if statistics derived from new data sources are used in the context of political decisions. Data sharing and value creation practices need to be supported by regulatory processes and mechanisms that are necessary to create a safe and enabling environment for statistical offices to fulfil their role as data stewards and for society, economy and government to fully benefit from it. A key step here is developing regulatory initiatives and a regulatory framework for national data strategies and defining the role of statistical offices in the wider data governance scheme.

The main goals of this session are to explore existing regulatory initiatives in the area of data stewardship and public data governance related to the role of statistical offices as data stewards and to facilitate a fruitful debate among representatives from different sectors.

### Topic 3: Data ethics

#### Session organizer: United Kingdom

In a world where data generated from all aspects of society can potentially be used by statistical offices to address their ever-growing information needs, considerations regarding data ethics have become increasingly important – how to ensure that data access, use and sharing is responsible, sustainable and guided by public benefit? What should be the ethical principles and to what extent can they be embedded in the law? What tools are needed so that the principles can effectively be applied in the everyday work of NSOs? Being at the forefront of these considerations is crucial for NSOs to ensure public trust and acceptability of using data for statistical purposes.

This session will examine the different approaches used around the world to assess ethical considerations during the production of official statistics. We will look at how ethical considerations could be established in law and explore ways in which the various NSOs balance public benefit with protecting privacy of individuals. Given its ongoing impact, the COVID-19 pandemic and its pressure on ethical frameworks will underpin the session.

### Topic 4: Implementing the Generic Law on Official Statistics – lessons learnt

#### Session organizer: UNSD and UNECE

The *Generic Law on Official Statistics* (GLOS) was published in 2016 and slightly revisited and extended two years later with the *Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation* (2019). GLOS was originally intended as a guide for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, but, in just 5 years, it is well on the way to becoming a global standard. It has already provided the basis for modernizing statistical legislation in many countries and has inspired regional adaptations in Latin America and the Middle East. In addition, GLOS is widely referenced in the recently adopted United Nations *Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems*.

UNECE standards related to modernizing official statistics typically have a 5-year review cycle, so now is a good time to pause and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of GLOS, and the lessons learned from its use in practice. In this session, we particularly welcome contributions from countries that have used GLOS or are currently using it as a basis for modernizing their statistical laws, highlighting where it has helped and where it might be improved.

## VI. Further information

All documents, including the timetable, will be available at the [meeting website](#). Registered participants will receive connection details to the online meeting nearer to the meeting dates.

## VII. Contact

Ms. Malgorzata Cwiek  
Statistician  
UNECE Statistical Division  
Tel: +41 22 917 3865  
E-mail: [cwiek@un.org](mailto:cwiek@un.org)

Ms. Caroline Jeunet  
Programme Assistant  
UNECE Statistical Division  
Tel: +41 22 917 3242  
E-mail: [caroline.jeunet@un.org](mailto:caroline.jeunet@un.org)

\* \* \* \* \*