

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2021/2022 Bureau
Geneva (online), 13-14 October 2021

Item IV(a) of the Provisional
Agenda

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE CES SESSION ON INNOVATION IN NATIONAL
STATISTICAL OFFICES ORGANIZATION AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

Prepared by New Zealand, Poland and UNECE

The informal CES session ‘Innovation in National Statistical Offices organization and working arrangements’ took place on 23 June 2021. The Conference agreed that the Capability and Communication Group under the High-level Group for Modernising Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) would take on board the outcome of the above mentioned CES session in the work on human resources and communication. The Conference also asked the Bureau to reflect on what further activities may be needed to reinforce and disseminate the lessons learned from the pandemic, identifying which changes can have positive impacts over the longer term, and what role the international community can play in consolidating these.

This document briefly presents the ongoing follow-up by the Task Team on Future of work that was set up under the HLG-MOS Capability and Communication Group, and proposals for possible (other) further activities to reinforce and disseminate the lessons learned from the pandemic.

The Bureau discussed and agreed on the possible further steps.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The informal CES session ‘Innovation in National Statistical Offices organization and working arrangements’ took place on 23 June. The session examined how NSOs and international organizations innovated their working arrangements to adapt to COVID-19 and how they can transition to a ‘new normal’ in the working environment coming out of the crisis.
2. The Conference agreed that the Capability and Communication Group under the High-level Group for Modernising Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) will take on board the outcome of the CES session ‘Innovation in national statistical offices organization and working arrangements’ in the work on human resources and communication. All interested countries are encouraged to participate in this work. The group reports to the HLG-MOS Executive Board which is overseeing the work and its progress.
3. The Conference asked the Bureau to reflect on what further activities may be needed to reinforce and disseminate the lessons learned from the pandemic, identifying which changes can have positive impacts over the longer term, and what role the international community can play in consolidating these, and to decide on possible further steps at the next CES Bureau meeting.

II. FOLLOW-UP BY HLG-MOS CAPABILITY AND COMMUNICATION GROUP

4. The HLG-MOS Modernisation Group on Capabilities and Communication has set up a Task Team on Future of work. The team is working on a set of toolkits for employees, employers and managers. These toolkits will address the various aspects and arrangements, tools and capabilities needed in more diverse modes of working that were accelerated by the COVID pandemic. The outcome of earlier CES sessions related to human resource management and training (2017), and to communication (2018) have been included in work and its planned output. First results will be presented at the HLG-MOS Modernisation Workshop (15-16 November 2021).

5. The Task Team and its subgroups are meeting on a two-weekly basis and additionally, sprints and other interactive meetings and tools are being used to advance the work. The team consists of representatives of the following countries: Albania, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland. As this collaborative work is strongly community driven, other countries are reminded that CES encouraged all interested countries to participate in this work.

III. ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN AND DISSEMINATE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the functioning of NSOs. During the Covid crisis, the statistical community was required to provide relevant indicators efficiently and as early as possible. Thus, it was associated with the need to gain access to new data sources and introduce innovative products.

7. Cooperation, continuity of communication, and the use of new opportunities offered by digitization contributed to solving the problems that arose during the pandemic. Despite the positive effects of the work carried out, it should be remembered that new opportunities should be constantly sought. This is particularly important from the point of view of identifying and acquiring new data sources that will allow for the generation of more comprehensive and multidimensional information describing the pandemic and its effects.

8. The experience gained during the Covid-19 crisis shows that the established production, coordination and communication processes of official statistics should be further developed so that the relevant statistics can be delivered reliably and on time also in crisis situations. The current global challenges more than ever have revealed the urgent need for NSO to become flexible and agile data stewards. It is the ability to adapt, going beyond the beaten paths of traditional activity, that proves to be of strategic importance for the development of statistical offices. The speed of reaction to changing reality and difficult conditions also plays an important role in this process.

9. In the context of the lessons learned from the pandemic and to prepare for a future crisis, **each NSO could develop emergency response recommendations that would maintain the necessary flexibility to respond to different crisis scenarios.**

10. The Covid-19 crisis has changed the needs of data users, especially the increased demand for short-term indicators in many areas. Additionally, in some cases, the methods of collecting data have changed. Therefore, **NSOs should work on the development and implementation of mechanisms for the rapid launch of new statistical outputs that will respond to the growing and ad hoc information needs of data users.**

11. An equally important aspect of NSOs' activity has become the issue of remote work and employee motivation in unusual working conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that many statistical office functions can be performed remotely. An important task turned out to be **maintaining adequate motivation among employees in the long term**, especially with limited contact with superiors and colleagues. Further, **regular efforts are needed to motivate employees, reduce their stress and maintain a sense of community**, and to focus on results rather than working hours.

12. During the pandemic, the **exchange of information, ideas and good practices within the international statistical community** was of great importance. It is worth keeping this procedure so that NSOs can develop general recommendations for use in the future.

13. In addition, as innovation was paramount to managing the pandemic, there is a lot of interest in how NSOs support innovation and sustain it. To this end, there is an initiative under the Blue Skies Thinking group about 'Innovation: Experimentation to Implementation' which could potentially be developed further in the context of the theme and discussion. **There could be merit in a new task force to focus on supporting and sustaining innovation within NSOs to provide guidance on what successful innovation models and practices are for NSOs, taking a broad view, i.e., people, processes, and system.**

14. The scope could consider some or all of the following:

- a. Operating models, workforce and culture needed within NSOs including aspects of governance and commissioning;
- b. The IT environments, architecture, procurement and partnerships needed for the types of innovation we are looking to do currently and into the future;
- c. Communicating and measuring quality in the context of experimentation and through to production of new and improved statistics.

IV. PROPOSAL FOR DECISION BY THE BUREAU

15. The Bureau is invited to:

- a) **discuss and decide on possible further steps to reinforce and disseminate the lessons learned from the pandemic and to support and sustain innovation in NSOs, including setting up a possible task force**
- b) **encourage countries to participate in the HLG-MOS Task Team on Future of Work and other follow-up actions to the CES session.**