

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2023/2025 Bureau
Cardiff, UK, 9-10 October 2023

Item III(e) of the Provisional
Agenda

DATA STEWARDSHIP: FOCUS OF FUTURE WORK

Note by Canada, Estonia and UNECE

The 2023 CES plenary session endorsed the document 'Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem' prepared by the Task Force on data stewardship. With this, the Task Force has completed its mandate.

The Conference supported the Task Force's proposals for further work on data stewardship and requested the CES Bureau to decide on priorities taking into account the feedback from electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES 2023 plenary session.

The Bureau highlighted the importance of continuing work on data stewardship and supported the establishment of a task force to work on the proposed priority areas.

I. BACKGROUND

1. In February 2021, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) set up a Task Force on data stewardship. The aim of the Task Force was to clarify the terms related to data stewardship and public data governance, and the tasks of NSOs in different settings.

2. The Task Force produced a draft report *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem*. The document was consulted with all CES members in spring 2023. It received very positive feedback and was unanimously supported for endorsement by the Conference. In its seventy-first plenary session, the Conference endorsed the document, subject to amendments resulting from the electronic consultation. It will be submitted to print before the end of 2023.

3. The document included a section of further work proposals and countries provided suggestions on priorities and additional further work topics through the consultation (see ECE/CES/2023/2/Add.1). Eighteen of the thirty-eight member states and organizations who responded to the electronic consultation gave detailed comments on further work. Twenty-seven countries indicated that they would be interested in participating in further work on this topic (and further seven countries possibly).

4. From the list of possible further work items in Section 1.4 of the report, countries indicated the following as the highest priorities:

(a) Provide more specific guidance, recommendations and tools for implementing data stewardship;

(b) Provide a forum for exchange of experience in implementing data stewardship;

(c) Identify a core set of responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards in national data ecosystems;

(d) Compile a knowledge base of best practices and examples of successful data stewardship implementation, including more detailed examples of how data stewardship is implemented, and the data services provided in practice.

5. During the discussion at the CES in June 2023, CES members highlighted that data stewardship extends the traditional role of NSOs as a producer of statistics to a data service provider to a wide variety of stakeholders. Future work should assess the capacity of NSOs to take on such a system-wide role, especially when it goes beyond the national statistical system to the public sector, and even to private data holders. The Conference considered country examples very valuable to show how the data stewardship functions can be implemented in different settings, as there is no one-size fits all solution applicable to all countries. CES members also emphasised that any future work on this topic under CES needs to be well coordinated with the global working group on data stewardship.

6. CES in June 2023 supported the Task Force's proposals for further work and requested the CES Bureau to decide on priorities in this work, taking into account the feedback from the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES 2023 plenary session.

7. Based on the comments received through the consultation and during the 2023 CES plenary session, **two priority areas of work**, presented briefly below, are proposed in this note for consideration by the Bureau: **(i) identifying core responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards; and (ii) providing a forum for systematisation and exchange of experience in implementing data stewardship.** It is proposed to **set up a Task Force** to undertake this work.

II. CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF NSOS ACTING AS DATA STEWARDS

8. In the consultation countries called for identifying a core set of responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards in national data ecosystems. Several countries asked for a stronger statement on the leading role of NSOs in data governance and stewardship, including in national data ecosystems more broadly. At the same time, some concerns were raised regarding the perceived risks in implementing data stewardship (including safeguarding professional independence and statistical confidentiality), especially when taking on data stewardship functions outside the statistical system. This speaks again to the contextual nature of data stewardship implementation and the need to look into details of how this works in different country contexts.

9. To address points (a) and (c) from the priority list identified by countries (see para 4), it is proposed to set up a Task Force to continue to explore the following **themes**:

(a) Challenges/barriers and opportunities for a leadership role in data stewardship by NSOs, paying particular attention to varied contexts;

(b) Scaling up the role that NSOs perform for the National Statistical System (NSS) to the digital data ecosystem more broadly;

(c) The role of an NSO's Chief Data Officer (CDO) compared to other kinds of CDOs (including the role of a CDO vs. Data Steward, how they interact/intersect, etc.);

(d) Partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders in the data ecosystem (including communication, exploring the public-private-academic sector relationships that can be

leveraged, etc.);

(e) The role of data stewardship in the context of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Big Data.

10. Potential **deliverables** resulting from this work may include:

(a) Identifying a core set of responsibilities of NSOs as data stewards in data ecosystems;

(b) Developing a generic roadmap for how to increase NSOs leadership role in data stewardship (taking as a starting point a [paper by Estonia et al.](#), presented at the 2020 CES plenary session);

(c) Preparing guidance materials for different audiences or focusing on data stewardship in specific areas – administrative data, open data, privately held data, geospatial data, governance models etc.;

(d) Preparing communication materials to raise awareness of data stewardship and NSOs role in it;

(e) Recommendations regarding data stewardship ‘as a service’;

(f) NSO risk profiles related to data stewardship in the digital data ecosystem;

(g) Frameworks, policies, and other instruments related to NSO trust and reliability.

III. SYSTEMATISATION AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTING DATA STEWARDSHIP

11. During consultations on the report countries expressed a lot of interest in exchanging experience and learning from practical implementation cases of data stewardship. This could be done via expert meetings or workshops that could be held in-person or online.

12. Such meetings would address points (b) and (d) from the priorities identified by countries (para 4). Collecting and systematising country experiences and best practices could lead to preparing concrete guidance on the implementation of data stewardship in a later stage. This exercise could also contribute to the designing and testing of a set of core responsibilities of data stewardship as described above. A survey and/or use-case analysis could be carried out in conjunction with the meetings.

13. It is proposed to organise expert meetings or workshops (with the help of the Task Force) on the following **themes**:

(a) Practical examples/country case studies, success stories and/or comparative analyses;

(b) Data governance operating models (including the management of different data sources such as administrative data and privately held data);

(c) Data stewardship related best practices, guiding principles, frameworks, and examples of policy instruments, implementation activities, and data literacy promotion (including those related to data governance, data ethics, data strategy, administrative data, data

quality etc.);

(d) Methodologies and tools (can include technologies or not), such as those related to data literacy, data sharing, privacy and confidentiality, communication with stakeholders, other tools related to data stewardship implementation and measurement, etc.

14. Potential **deliverables** resulting from these discussions may include:

(a) Use-case analysis of a set of core responsibilities of NSOs related to data stewardship;

(b) Compiling a knowledge base of best practices and examples of successful data stewardship implementation, including more detailed examples of implementing data stewardship, overcoming the obstacles, and the data services provided in practice;

(c) Collecting examples of maturity models and other assessments of data stewardship, and further develop/test a generic maturity model for the assessment of NSO data stewardship;

(d) Maintenance of the previous report's glossary (consistent with the work of the United Nations Statistics Division's global Working Group on Data Stewardship) and facilitating the translation of key terms into other languages.

15. At a later stage, the experience acquired from the meetings and practical implementation examples could lead to developing basic/guiding principles of data stewardship by monitoring and analysing implementation of data policies and data governance initiatives by NSOs.

IV. CONCLUSION AND ACTION REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

16. More focused work in a Task Force would allow to investigate the issues deeper, and better address the different contexts of the role of the NSO in the digital data ecosystem and the practical implementation of data stewardship. The Task Force's work would benefit from the discussions and examples collected via Expert Group meetings or workshops.

17. **The Bureau is invited to discuss and decide on further work on data stewardship under CES, and identify priorities.** If the Bureau agrees with setting up a new Task Force, then its Terms of Reference would be presented to the next meeting of the Bureau.

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