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Conference of European Statisticians

Seventy-first plenary session

Geneva, 22–23 June 2023

Report of the seventy-first plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

I. Introduction

A. Attendance

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its seventy-first plenary session on 22–23 June 2023 in Geneva. Most participants were present in person while some attended through remote connection.
2. The session was attended by representatives from Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Uzbekistan.
3. The session was also attended by representatives of the European Commission (Eurostat), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Belarus. The following specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations also attended: Bank for International Settlements (BIS), Eurasian Economic Commission, European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

B. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/CES/104

4. P. Dalton, the Chair of CES, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The provisional agenda (ECE/CES/104) was adopted.



II. Work of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/9 and 9/Add.1-2

5. A. Arora (Canada), the Chair of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HGL-MOS) presented the outcomes of work in 2022 and plans for the rest of 2023. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) HLG-MOS is a great example of cooperation in the global statistical community and has played a key role in driving and supporting modernisation for the community;

(b) The work of HLG-MOS is greatly appreciated for its contributions to innovative topics relevant to official statistics;

(c) Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT have rapidly permeated the society and can have a significant impact on the work of official statistics. HLG-MOS is already discussing and investigating applications of AI and machine learning (ML), and continues to explore how to make the best use of this technology in official statistics.

Action taken by the Conference

6. The Conference:

(a) Approved the annual report of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS), including the outcomes of the activities carried out in 2022 and plans for the rest of 2023 (ECE/CES/2023/9 and Add.2);

(b) Approved the updated terms of reference for the continuation of HLG-MOS work for 2023-2025 (ECE/CES/2023/9/Add.1);

(c) Supported the continuation of the work on modernization of official statistics, and requested the HLG-MOS to continue reporting annually on the outcomes of its work and plans for the following year;

(d) Invited national and international statistical organizations to support the HLG-MOS work programme and to become partners in the Statistical Modernization Community.

III. Moving towards open-source technologies – strategic and managerial perspective

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/19 - 23

7. The session was organized by Ireland and was chaired by F. Kay (Ireland). The discussion was informed by papers from Ireland, Poland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The papers were summarized in a presentation by M. Verbruggen (Netherlands).

8. K. Burnett-Isaacs (HLG-MOS Project Manager, Canada) presented the current work on supporting open-source adoption under the HLG-MOS activity on Open-Source Transformation Knowledge Sharing, as well as the ModernStats Carpentry project.

9. A panel, comprised of K. Burnett-Isaacs (Canada), E. Lucey (Ireland), M. Verbruggen (Netherlands), C. Thindberg (Norway) and D. Rozkrut (Poland) gave their perspectives and reacted to comments from participants.

10. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) NSOs need to transition to open-source technologies in light of increasing demands for data, which may involve using new data sources. To make that transition, new tools, processing environments and services (such as data linkage and integration) are needed.

(b) Adopting open-source technologies could provide NSOs with an opportunity to:

(i) Redesign and standardise statistical production processes, or orientate them around data pipelines;

(ii) Embrace practices of working in collaboration with others in an open, transparent and efficient way.

(c) It is challenging to realise these opportunities at the same time when doing regular work. Adopting open-source technologies involves some risks which must be mitigated: risk to business continuity of making the transition, cybersecurity, and possible lack of support from the software community in case of problems. Furthermore, we should avoid replacing one legacy production system with another, as in future new languages will emerge that may replace the currently popular ones.

(d) In addition to open-source, other useful technologies are developing, such as cloud systems and generative artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT). Cloud platforms may be a convenient production environment for open-source solutions and offer more flexibility and utilities. The transition to cloud may also improve data security but it has to be well communicated to overcome any negative perceptions.

(e) Some offices are experimenting with the use of ChatGPT and similar services to lower the cost of converting legacy code into open-source code. Results are good, but a balance should be struck between how much to use fast convenient solutions such as ChatGPT, and how much to take the opportunity to redesign systems. In future, artificial intelligence could be a game changer for how statisticians work.

(f) A key organizational consideration is how to divide the responsibilities of the IT and statistics functions when implementing open-source. Different approaches are possible. E.g., statisticians could be responsible for the code to perform statistical processing, and IT specialists for providing a platform. Another approach is to work in multidisciplinary teams to take advantage of software engineering skills of the IT professionals. In any case, the IT and methodology staff should find a common language and understanding to be able to work together.

(g) Skills of staff are crucial for implementing open-source technologies. This is important to maximize its benefits for collaborative work and sharing of code. Communities of support and practice, and on-the-job training can help with that.

(h) Support, guidelines, case studies and tools are needed to help statisticians to use open-source in the best way possible. For example, guidelines for sharing code safely among government agencies would be useful.

(i) Adopting open-source technologies is not just a technological but a corporate-wide issue. Leadership, strategy, tools and clear communication to staff are needed to make the transition successful. The best practices, standards, cultural and working practice changes that lie behind the transition are as important as the coding aspect.

Action taken by the Conference

11. The Conference:

(a) Supported continuation of the work of the Open-Source Adoption team under HLG-MOS, taking into account the strategic issues and priorities identified during the session, and encouraged countries to contribute to the team's work;

(b) Asked HLG-MOS and the CES Bureau to discuss the follow-up to this session, and decide on further steps.

IV. Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

A. Outcomes of the recent in-depth reviews carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians

Documentation: 5, 5/Add.1, 7, 7/Add.1, 12, 13

Action taken by the Conference

12. The Conference confirmed the following topics of the upcoming in-depth reviews, and asked the Secretariat and countries leading the reviews to report on the outcomes in June 2024:

(a) **Use cases for alternative population bases** (October 2023; led by Poland and UK; contributions by Albania, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand)

(b) **Linking data across domains and sources** (October 2023/February 2024; led by Canada; Canada, Poland, UK and OECD will refine the topic to better focus the review)

(c) **Timeliness and frequency of official statistics** (February 2024; led by Canada and Portugal; contributions by Poland and UK)

(d) **Administrative microdata for climate, energy and environment statistics** (February 2024; led by Ireland; contributions by Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Poland, UK, OECD)

13. Countries who would like to contribute to the reviews are invited to inform the Secretariat.

14. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the in-depth review on measuring well-being, supported the proposal to set up a Task Force to develop guidelines to assist countries in producing well-being indicators, and requested the Task Force to report back on the guidelines.

15. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the in-depth review on data ethics and asked the CES Bureau to decide on next steps in this area based on the outcome of the discussion at the CES seminar on this topic on 28 June 2023.

B. Hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/6 and 6/Add.1

16. M. Truszczynski (Denmark) presented the in-depth review paper on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources, including the main findings and the recommendations for future steps that the CES Bureau agreed in February 2023. The Secretariat presented the main results of the e-consultation.

17. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Although the level of development of administrative sources varies significantly across countries, all countries face some issues with regard to measuring hard-to-reach groups. Further work in this field would be useful for all countries;

(b) There is increasing demand for more disaggregated data on hard-to-reach population groups. To fill the gaps, cooperation and communication between statisticians and owners of administrative data sources should be improved, and statistical systems need to be further developed;

(c) Administrative data sources are subject to error and incompleteness. Therefore, multiple estimation systems should be used;

(d) A specific hard-to-reach group are emigrants (persons who have left a country). Administrative sources can be used to improve data on that group but they mainly

refer to stocks and not flows. Moreover, the internationally agreed definitions of international migration are not suitable for this purpose, and are difficult to apply;

(e) Another group to be covered are young children, in particular those with disabilities, and those in residential or alternative care. UNICEF is interested to join the Task Force to explore these issues further;

(f) A system of indirect estimations can be used for children and other hard-to-reach groups where most of the data are missing and there are very few actual cases to work with.

Action taken by the Conference

18. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the review on hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources, supported setting up a Task Force on this topic, and asked the Task Force to report back to the Conference. The Task Force should take into account in its work the feedback from the electronic consultation and the discussion during the CES 2023 plenary session.

C. Social cohesion

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/8 and 8/Add.1

19. G. Schellenberg (Canada) presented the in-depth review paper on social cohesion, its main findings, and the recommendations for future steps that the CES Bureau agreed upon in February 2023. The Secretariat presented the main results of the e-consultation.

20. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Social cohesion is an important concept that can help describe how society is changing through the lenses of inclusivity, both geographically and socio-economically. In the United Kingdom, for example, COVID-19 and the recent coronation were viewed as having positive effects in civil society, including high rates of volunteerism and civic participation;

(b) In general, more fragmentation of society can be observed in countries, including political polarization and rising anti-immigrant sentiments. The Task Team should ensure that the measure of social cohesion allows for analysis at subnational level as well as for concrete groups;

(c) The social media and technology can have both positive and negative effects on the development and maintenance of social cohesion;

(d) Statistical offices should consider social cohesion in their specific country context, but also focus on the commonalities for the purpose of analysis and comparability;

(e) Using alternative data sources could be helpful to diversify and improve measurement of social cohesion.

Action taken by the Conference

21. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the review on social cohesion, and supported further work by a Task Team in this area, taking into account the feedback from the electronic consultation and the discussion during the CES 2023 plenary session.

V. Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference

A. Core values of official statistics and the related behaviours

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/1, 1/ Rev.1 and 1/Add.1

22. P. Dalton (Ireland), the Chair of the Task Team on Core Values of Official Statistics presented the draft list of behaviours that show how the core values are and should be lived.

The Secretariat presented the results of the e-consultation on the behaviours (the core values themselves were endorsed during the 70th CES plenary session).

23. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The work of the Task Team was highly appreciated. The official statistics community should adopt these behaviours to live the core values of official statistics;

(b) Successful communication on how we live the values will result in greater trust from the public. We still need to discuss how to use the core values and behaviours in communication in practice;

(c) How individual statistical offices live the core values of official statistics has an impact on how official statistics is perceived across countries. In particular new staff need to be trained to live the values as representatives of official statistics;

(d) The core values and related behaviours are existential and need to be continuously reviewed to reflect changes in the role and responsibilities of national statistical offices;

(e) While the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics have stood the test of time, their implementation guidelines and interpretation will be reviewed at the global level to reflect the changing realities. Capacity development should also be provided on how to implement the Fundamental Principles and prevent breaches.

Action taken by the Conference

24. The Conference endorsed the updated document *Core Values of Official Statistics: Defining the behaviours that show how we live the values* (ECE/CES/2023/1/Rev.1), and encouraged countries and organizations to make use of this material in day-to-day practical work, as well as in strategic documents. The Conference will review in a few years how the core values and behaviours are used in practice.

25. The country examples to illustrate the behaviours will be made available on the web.

B. Data stewardship

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/2 and 2/Add.1

26. U. Lee (Estonia), Chair of the Task Force on Data Stewardship presented the report *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem*. The Secretariat presented the results of the e-consultation. The report received very positive feedback and all CES members agreed to endorse the document.

27. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Clarification of the term ‘data stewardship’ and the discussions around NSOs becoming a Data Steward are very useful.

(b) 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.

(c) Country examples are 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.

(d) Any future work on this topic under CES needs to be well coordinated with the global working group on data stewardship.

Action taken by the Conference

28. The Conference endorsed the document *Data stewardship and the role of national statistical offices in the new data ecosystem*, (ECE/CES/2023/2), subject to amendments presented in ECE/CES/2023/2/Add.1.

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

C. Measuring circular economy

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/3 and 3/Add.1

30. M. Sovala (Finland), Chair of the Task Force on measuring circular economy presented the *Joint UNECE/OECD Guidelines for Measuring Circular Economy (Part A)*. He emphasized the importance of international guidelines for measuring circular economy for related work at the national level. P. Schreyer (OECD) emphasised the high interest of policy communities in this work, and the excellent cooperation of UNECE and OECD in preparing the joint Guidelines. The Secretariat presented the results of the e-consultation.

Action taken by the Conference

31. The Conference endorsed the *Joint UNECE/OECD Guidelines for Measuring Circular Economy (Part A)* (ECE/CES/2023/3), subject to amendments presented ECE/CES/2023/3/Add.1.

32. The Conference supported the continuation of work to develop Part B of the material, including guidance on data sources and on using indicators, the required institutional collaboration, and more case examples.

D. Set of core disaster-risk-related indicators

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/4 and 4/Add.1

33. M. Gandolfo (Italy), representing the chair country of the Task Force on hazardous events and disasters presented the *Pilot set of core disaster-risk-related indicators*. She emphasized the importance of disaster-related statistics and indicators, giving the example of recent floods in Emilia-Romagna. The Secretariat presented the outcomes of the e-consultation.

34. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) National statistical offices can make important contributions to disaster-risk reduction by providing relevant statistics on exposure and vulnerability;

(b) The indicators should be useful and feasible for local and national practices;

(c) The need for collaboration with other institutions, such as Central Banks, Ministries of Finance, but also with the private sector (e.g. insurance companies) to improve the quality of natural disaster data was emphasized;

(d) Australia provided a practical national example of a Virtual Center set up in response to recent wildfires and floods. The Australian Climate Service provides information to support planning for and management of such events, including provision of data to emergency response agencies during events. The virtual centre is a consortium between the Australian Government's Scientific research organisation, its Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics;

(e) IMF suggested to link the work of the Task Force with the G20 Data Gaps Initiative as there is great interest to get more information on exposure (e.g. value of infrastructure at risk).

(f) The scope of measuring risks and hazards should be well-defined. For example, social unrest and military conflicts are included in the Sendai Framework but often not included in measurement. This depends on the national context. The ongoing international work on updating the classification of hazards and its operationalisation is expected to bring more clarity into this issue.

(g) It is important to harmonize outputs and avoid duplication in the development of indicator sets. Existing indicators from other international statistical frameworks should be utilised as much as possible and input sought from experts in the field.

Action taken by the Conference

35. The Conference endorsed the *Pilot set of core disaster-risk-related indicators* (ECE/CES/2023/4), subject to amendments presented ECE/CES/2023/4/Add.1.

36. The Conference supported the continuation of work to develop practical implementation guidelines, including guidance on data sources and on using indicators, and collecting more case examples.

37. The Conference supported the continuation of work to contribute to the global efforts on the statistical operationalization of terms, definitions and classifications used in disaster risk management.

VI. Access to privately held data

38. The session provided updates since the CES discussion on this topic in June 2022. A Task Team on access to privately held data has been set up to collect best practices in collaborating with private data providers, building on the outcomes of a survey that was carried out among countries in 2022. In a later stage this can form a basis for developing guidance in this area.

39. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) To avoid that multiple government departments acquire and pay for data from the same private sector companies, public sector should act as one entity, possibly through a centralized hub. Statistical office could play that role. If data are used for public policy purposes, in principle the access should be free-of-charge;

(b) Innovative solutions, clear governance, promoting a data sharing culture, and adhering to ethical practices to maintain trust is important in collaborating with private sector data providers. The level of aggregation in the accessible data is very important for the utility of the data;

(c) The access to privately held data can be organized in different ways in statistical offices. Some (e.g. Australia) have established a dedicated unit to manage relationships with the private sector and explore new types of private sector data;

(d) Several examples of collaboration with private sector data providers were brought (e.g. Australia, Canada, Republic of Moldova and Poland). Sharing examples of how this works in practice would be useful. It can support NSOs efforts in advocating for private sector data access, set precedents, provide inspiring examples and help make business cases for its use;

(e) Legislation is important (but not sufficient) for getting the access to privately held data in a steady and sustainable way. Several countries have such legislation in place or adopted recently (e.g. Republic of Moldova, Poland). There are important relevant developments in the European Union: the EU Data Act is in the process of final approvals (it will become applicable in 20 months after entering into force);

(f) IMF informed about an international initiative called the “[Development Data Partnership](#)” involving international organizations and about forty private companies like LinkedIn, Meta, Google, etc. that provide data for free, leading to concrete outputs in various projects (over a hundred projects have already been set up).

Action taken by the Conference

40. The Conference supported further work on collaboration with private data holders and asked the Task Team to report on the outcome of its work in one-two years’ time. Countries and organizations who are interested to join the Task Team were invited to contact the UNECE Secretariat.

VII. Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/10, 14 and addenda, 15, 15/Add.1, 16, 16/Add.1, 17, and INF.1

Action taken by the Conference

41. The Conference confirmed the decisions of the CES Bureau as reflected in their meeting reports and approved the report on the implementation of the 2022 UNECE Statistical Programme (ECE/CES/2022/14 and Addenda).
42. The Conference welcomed the annual report by the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia (ECE/CES/2023/10), and requested the group to continue reporting annually on its work.
43. The Conference took note of the implications of the UN Statistical Commission session in March 2023, and the UNECE Commission session in April 2023 for the work of the Conference.
44. The Conference adopted the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2023 and the changes to the publications programme (ECE/CES/2023/15 and 15/Add.1).
45. The Conference adopted the Programme of Work for 2024 including the list of planned publications and meetings, and recommended it to the EXCOM for approval (ECE/CES/2023/16 and 16/Add.1). Regarding the decision to organize an expert meeting on statistics on children, the Conference requested this meeting be conducted in 2024 with interpretation and translation of the agenda and report to the UNECE official languages.
46. The Conference endorsed the Terms of Reference of the Joint Working Group on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (a joint body under the CES and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP)) as a standing body under the CES and CEP. Pending endorsement by the CEP, the Secretariat was requested to submit the TOR of the group to UNECE EXCOM for approval.
47. The Conference requested to be informed in 2024 about the implementation of the Statistical Programme and the outcomes of the expert meetings in 2023, and the Statistical Programme for 2024.
48. The Conference endorsed the outline of key components of the programme of work of Statistics subprogramme for 2025 including the amendment recommended by the Bureau (ECE/CES/2023/INF.1).
49. The Conference requested the CES Teams of Specialists to regularly report to the Conference, in particular when they have completed an important part of work, and present summaries of electronic consultations on their final outputs.
50. The Conference emphasized the importance of translating into English, French and Russian the main documents for the CES plenary session and the meetings of its Groups of Experts (the main documents include a provisional agenda, a report and one main document for each agenda sub-item. For the CES plenary session, the main documents include in addition six documents for each sub-session).
51. The Conference emphasized the importance of providing interpretation in English, French and Russian for the CES plenary session and the meetings of the Groups of Experts, and of recording meetings listed in the meeting calendar.

VIII. Data ethics – a key enabler of social acceptability

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/24-26

52. The seminar session took place on 28 June and was chaired by A. Arora (Canada) and N. Shearman (UK). The discussion was informed by presentations of the Ethical Leadership Task Team under the HLG-MOS Capabilities and Communication Group, papers from

France and New Zealand, and a joint paper by Canada/UK/Ireland/Eurostat. A panel, comprised of E. Dhuli (Albania), A. Arora (Canada), D. Rozkrut (Poland) and N. Shearman (UK) gave their perspectives and responded to comments from participants.

53. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) Data ethics is not a new issue but it is getting a new conceptual meaning in the context of new data sources. Collaboration with data protection authorities and civil society is important to ensure privacy, and increase trust in statistics.

(b) The level of social acceptability differs in countries and changes over time. Social acceptability should be broad but not necessarily universal as we may not achieve 100% acceptance from society. At the same it is important to consider opinions of the marginalised groups.

(c) Statistical organizations must demonstrate that their practices are ethical. Communications on ethics should approach various target groups differently, such as parliamentarians, media, academia, businesses and general public. Society now holds organizations to higher standards and requires greater accountability in terms of ethics.

(d) Communicating statistics as a public good based on high ethical standards is crucial to maintain trust in statistics. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the materials prepared for their 30th anniversary can be helpful in promoting ethics in NSOs.

(e) Ethical issues involve complex considerations, such as the balance between public good and privacy. The concept of stewardship highlights the responsibility of official statisticians to promote ethical standards among stakeholders in the data ecosystem. Both new initiatives and existing practices should be reviewed from ethics perspective, and outdated approaches revised.

(f) Many countries lack resources to work on data ethics. Sharing examples of best practices and working on guidance for data ethics together internationally will allow to pool the resources. Internal culture and understanding of ethics in statistical organizations as both human behaviour and professional/business ethics is crucial. Insider threats are one of the biggest threats to organisations.

(g) Ethics education should start from schools and include open courses, seminars and collaboration with universities. Incorporating ethics into statistical literacy can help explain the importance of ethics.

(h) Countries have called for the development of a broad framework covering the data ethics issues that NSOs should consider. The framework should be flexible, adaptable and responsive to changes and situations. It should be embedded in the work of NSOs, and its use communicated to users.

Action taken by the Conference

54. The Conference asked the Bureau to discuss the follow-up to the seminar ‘Data ethics - a key enabler of social acceptability’, taking into account the work currently undertaken under the HLG-MOS, decide on further steps at its October 2023 meeting, and report back to the CES plenary session in 2024.

IX. Timeliness, frequency and granularity of official statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2023/27-33

55. The seminar session took place on 28 June and was chaired by A. Arora (Canada) and F. Lima (Portugal). It discussed country experiences of improving timeliness, frequency and granularity, and examined challenges, lessons learned and opportunities with a forward-looking perspective of maintaining NSOs’ relevance in an ever-changing statistical environment.

56. Keynote speaker S. MacFeely (World Health Organization) stressed the importance for NSOs to stay “fit for purpose” and to constantly adapt to the demands for more timely, frequent and granular statistics. He saw two major challenges in further development of

statistics: use of new data sources and methods; and communication with users and stakeholders. To meet evolving user demands, the boundaries of official statistics may need to be reconsidered.

57. The keynote speech touched upon emergency cases where having timely and granular data was imperative, including disease outbreaks, migration caused by war, new health challenges in relation to climate change, etc. To cope with emergency demands official statistics should equip itself with the necessary capacity to deliver timely data. Official statistics face several challenges here: setting up a proper data governance framework, lack of statistical infrastructure to integrate data from different sources, weak institutional coordination to ensure data interoperability, securing access to privately held data, and using big data.

58. Communicating new and innovative products and methods remains challenging. The challenges include explaining to users and stakeholders the uncertainty and volatility of early estimates, and the use of new and different data sources or synthetic data in statistical modelling.

59. The co-chairs presented a summary of country and international experiences based on the papers submitted by Canada, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom and OECD. Country representatives and OECD provided further details on specific questions.

60. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated NSOs' efforts to improve timeliness, frequency and granularity of official statistics. NSOs should consider how to incorporate lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic and rethink the approaches and methodologies used. Ad-hoc solutions during the pandemic which continue to be relevant and useful could be transformed into regular processes. Methods used should be revisited and refined for further improvement.

(b) It is important to continue the innovation, which should be "fit-for-purpose" and tailored for varied needs in different areas of statistics, taking into consideration human resources and financial restrictions.

(c) Facing declining response rates of traditional surveys, budget limitations and competing data providers, NSOs need to explore alternative data sources, establish new partnerships, and leverage statistical modelling techniques. Enhancement of NSOs' capacity, including investment in new tools, IT systems and human capital, is considered critical.

(d) Administrative and other data sources are essential in meeting user demands for timeliness, frequency and granularity. NSOs should ensure cooperation with administrative registers and other data providers, the continuity and durability of changes, and effective communication and engagement of users and stakeholders. Furthermore, statistical systems should be set up to ensure interoperability so that data accuracy and coherence are not compromised by integrating administrative and other data sources.

(e) NSOs should strike the right balance between stakeholders' needs and data quality, while safeguarding confidentiality as an important requirement in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

(f) Continuing national and international dialogue is necessary to bring about the required improvements, agreement on standards and information sharing.

Action taken by the Conference

61. The Conference asked the Bureau to take into account the discussion on timeliness, granularity and frequency of official statistics in the in-depth review of that topic in February 2024, decide on further steps, and report back to the CES plenary session in 2024.

X. Election of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Bureau

62. According to the *Rules governing the work of the Conference and its Bureau* and based on the proposal put forward by A. Zigure (Latvia), the Kingmaker, the Conference elected the following Heads of National Statistical Offices to serve on the Bureau for the 2023-2025 term of office:

Padraig Dalton (Ireland) as Chair;
and the following Vice-Chairpersons of the Bureau:

Elsa Dhuli, Albania
Anil Arora, Canada
Dominik Rozkrut, Poland
Ian Diamond, United Kingdom
Graciela Márquez, Mexico
Mark Sowden, New Zealand

63. As the CES decided in 2021, the Kingmaker (the most senior previous Chair or Vice-Chair of the Conference) is a permanent observer on the Bureau. Currently the Kingmaker is Aija Zigure, Latvia.

64. Stepan Mnatsakanyan (Armenia) will continue his duties in the Bureau until a consensus is reached to fill the one remaining vacant post on the Bureau. The Conference will continue the consultation process through a written procedure.

XI. Other business

65. The seventy-second CES plenary session is planned to take place during the week of 17-21 June 2024 (exact dates to be confirmed), back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP), and the plenary session of UN-GGIM (as decided by the 70th CES plenary session).
