UNECE/EFTA Workshop on Modernizing Statistical Legislation

Tirana, Albania, 29-30 May 2024

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The UNECE/EFTA Workshop on Modernizing Statistical Legislation will take place on 29-30 May 2024 in Tirana, Albania. English-Russian interpretation will be available throughout the meeting.

All countries and organizations are invited to offer contributions related to the topics proposed in section IV in the form of presentations and/or papers. Deadline for submission of abstracts has been extended to 2 April.

The meeting website with registration link and all other information can be found at *https://unece.org/statistics/events/StatisticalLegislationWorkshop2024.*

I. Introduction

Improving the governance of statistical production and the legal framework is fundamental to producing high-quality statistics and a priority for many countries. Particularly, in the context of the changing data landscape, emergence of other data producers and new data sources, a flexible and forward-looking legal basis is needed to support and enable national statistical systems that are fit for purpose and for the environment that they are trying to measure.

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 workshop will provide a platform for sharing experience in modernizing legal and institutional frameworks of official statistics and discussing emerging issues posing legal challenges to national statistical systems. The target audience for the meeting will be experts from national statistical offices and international organizations interested in strengthening the legal framework of official statistics and legal aspects of data access, governance, and stewardship.

The workshop will be organized by the Steering Group on Statistical Legislation, including Albania, Armenia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, EFTA, Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics

Division (UNSD) and UNECE, with support of EFTA and hosted by the Institute of Statistics of Albania (INSTAT).

II. Objectives of the workshop

The objectives of the workshop 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
- Reflect and gather insights 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.

III. Call for contributions

All countries and organizations are invited to offer contributions related to the topics proposed in section IV in the form of presentations and/or papers.

If you are interested in contributing a paper or presentation, **please send a short abstract to the secretariat (cwiek@un.org) by 2 April,** describing the planned content of your contribution. The organizers will contact the authors and inform them whether their contribution has been selected.

If you intend to deliver a paper, the deadline for submission is 30 April. Presentation slides should be submitted by 10 May.

The session organizers will select the contributions to be presented at the meeting, prioritizing contributions that:

- Boost the debate on emerging legal issues
- Share lessons learned, good practices and innovative approaches
- Identify issues for further international work.

The papers should be maximum 6 pages long and submitted in English. Figures or tables should be accompanied by titles, and all abbreviations should be explained when used for the first time. References can be included in footnotes or at the end. Papers should be prepared using the template available on the meeting webpage.

IV. Proposed topics of contributions

The following topics are proposed for discussion at the meeting:

1. **Cutting-edge developments in statistical legislation.**
2. **Emerging legal issues around AI, synthetic data, and machine learning.**
3. **Bylaws, soft laws, codes – fit into the overall landscape, added value, appropriateness and effectiveness.**
4. **Social acceptability and the role of statistical laws in society – the perspective of and engagement with data users, holders and subjects on the statistical and legislation process.**
5. **Links between statistical laws and other legislation – data protection, human rights, and data acts.**

6. **Privacy, confidentiality and statistical disclosure control vs. new technologies and increased demand for more granular data.**
7. **Legal issues for discussion submitted by other expert groups and any emerging issues.**

Many topics proposed above are interconnected and linked to the evolving roles of NSOs, data stewardship, modernization of official statistics, data ethics or technological progress. **The authors are invited to indicate the topic(s) for which their contribution is most relevant.**

The scope and number of workshop sessions will be confirmed based on the received contributions.

V.   Notes of the proposed topics

1.   Cutting-edge developments in statistical legislation

We are looking for contributions that relate to new developments in statistical legislation, in particular for provisions that have not been foreseen in the GLOS. We are looking for case studies from across the globe where legislation has been used in a radical and innovative way to solve an emerging issue or problem or where a new approach has been taken.

2.   Emerging legal issues around AI, synthetic data, machine learning

The use of AI, synthetic data and machine learning are new innovative technologies that may play a huge role in future statistical production. We are interested in submissions where legislation or soft laws (guidelines codes, principles etc.) have been developed or are being developed to tackle these issues, or equally, we are looking for submissions that argue that new legislation is not needed as the existing legislative principles are adequate to address these challenges.

3.   Bylaws, soft laws, codes – fit into the overall landscape, added value, appropriateness and effectiveness.

Many statistical systems have codes of practice or guidelines as part of their regulatory framework. We would be interested in contributions about how well these work, what is best covered by these codes, what their advantages and disadvantages are and finally, what should never be put into such devices. In addition and related to topic 2, if these codes and principles are suitable to the use of big data and innovative technologies.

4.   Social acceptability and the role of statistical laws in society – the perspective of and engagement with data users, holders and subjects on the statistical and legislation process.

How does the law intersect with social acceptability? We would welcome contributions that outline how the law-making process was undertaken to ensure that the legislation addresses public concerns and delivers a law that that was acceptable to all stakeholders. We would also welcome contributions regarding how the law may have been used to overcome an issue of social acceptability. In particular, we are interested in how this worked out and whether there was any pushback from stakeholders.

5.   Links between statistical laws and other legislation – data protection, human rights, data acts.

To operate effectively, a statistical office needs strong legislative framework, but it also needs to work in compliance with the wider legislation in the country, for instance, privacy and data protection frameworks, a human rights act, data acts or legislation concerning burdens on businesses. We are looking for contributions and examples of how this works in practice and how tensions that may arise between the duties of the NSO and non-statistical legislation are managed, including their potential

impact on the NSO's professional independence and its role as the coordinator of the national statistical system.

6.   Privacy, confidentiality and statistical disclosure control vs. new technologies and increased demand for more granular data.

We are looking for contributions concerning legislation that preserves statistical confidentiality whilst allowing access for research and statistical purposes and dissemination of statistics at relevant breakdown levels (regional, industry), etc. We are especially interested in the following questions:

- How is the implementation of the data protection laws impacting the statistical law and the production of official statistics?
- How to ensure maintaining anonymity in the face of technological progress?
- Are there different levels of sensitivity of data?
- Could privacy and confidentiality protection in statistical legislation be adapted to better reflect this and hence increase the utility of official statistics?

7.   Legal issues for discussion submitted by other expert groups and any emerging issues.

We are inviting representatives of groups and bodies working on other topics to submit for discussion at the Workshop any questions or issues related to statistical legislation that have arisen in their field of work.

VI. Further information

All documents will be available on the meeting website.

VII. Contact

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