

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

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

Item III (b) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE  
ON MEASUREMENT OF WELL-BEING**

**Prepared by Israel and the Secretariat**

*In February 2023 the Bureau carried out an in-depth review of the measurement of well-being. As an outcome, the Bureau decided to establish a task force to develop guidelines for the production of well-being indicators.*

*The Bureau reviewed and approved the terms of reference of the Task Force on measurement of well-being.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in February 2023 conducted an in-depth review of the measurement of well-being. The review was based on a report prepared by Israel with contributions from Mexico, Netherlands, OECD, and the UNECE Secretariat (document ECE/CES/2023/7). The review focused on the measurement of current well-being in a national context, often referred to as well-being ‘here and now’.<sup>1</sup> When used in this note, ‘well-being’ refers to well-being here and now.

2. Since the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report on measurement of economic performance and social progress (2009), there has been a growing interest in measuring well-being. Measures of well-being have attracted much attention in the media and from policy makers. More recently, the demand for information about citizens’ well-being was accentuated during the Covid-19 pandemic. The in-depth review revealed broad interest in the measurement of well-being but also challenges and different practices among countries that produce well-being indicators.

3. In the survey carried out as part of the in-depth review, 30 out of 39 countries that replied compile well-being indicators. National frameworks draw to a large extent on the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, the OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress and Eurostat’s Quality of Life Indicators. While these frameworks follow a multidimensional approach there are differences in terms of typology and definitions, and the selection of dimensions and indicators. National frameworks are mainly developed for national purposes and tailored to the specific context and intended use in countries. Hence, national frameworks differ in the selection and definitions of dimensions and indicators.

4. A range of methodological differences and challenges are linked to the compilation of well-being indicators. These include the calculation of objective and subjective indicators,

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between well-being ‘here and now’, ‘elsewhere’ and ‘after’ is elaborated in *Conference of European Statisticians – Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development*. (UNECE, 2014).

different approaches to measuring inequalities and the aggregation of individual indicators into composite measures.

5. A variety of data sources are used across countries. Most well-being indicators rely only or to a great extent on annual data and are released to the public with a considerable time lag compared to the reference period. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for more timely indicators for households' well-being and the need to examine and exploit new data sources, including, e.g., big data and social media.

6. The communication of well-being indicators is also considered a challenge in many countries. Well-being statistics can be disseminated in various ways: as individual indicators, as a scoreboard, by use of composite measures, or a combination of these. Because of the complexity and multidimensional nature of well-being the communication should be carefully planned and may involve consultation with stakeholders and user groups.

7. The Bureau welcomed the report which was found comprehensive and helpful in directing further work on measurement of well-being. The Bureau noted that several frameworks for measuring well-being exist, including those of OECD and Eurostat, the SDGs and 2025 SNA. Further work should take existing frameworks as a starting point and focus on synthesizing these into operational guidelines to assist countries in producing well-being indicators.

8. The guidelines should focus on core indicators across the dimensions of well-being where harmonisation and improved international comparability is feasible. The guidelines should clarify typology, provide definitions, and give guidance on data sources, compilation methods and communication. The guidelines should give leeway for national frameworks to adapt to country needs and allow inclusion of country specific indicators.

9. The guidelines should be forward looking. In the drafting of the guidelines, it will be important to coordinate with ongoing work, including on Beyond GDP, the SDGs and the update of the SNA.

10. In conclusion, the CES Bureau supported establishing a task force to develop guidelines on measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing well-being indicators. The Task Force's terms of reference were requested to be submitted to the 2023 October Bureau meeting for approval.

## **II. MANDATE**

11. The Task Force on measurement of well-being reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from October 2023 to June 2025.

## **III. OBJECTIVE**

12. The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidelines on measurement of well-being for countries that produce or consider producing multidimensional well-being indicators.

## **IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS**

13. Taking into consideration the findings of the in-depth review, the guidelines should:

- (a) Take existing frameworks as starting point and focus on synthesizing these into operational guidelines to assist countries in producing well-being indicators;

- (b) Focus on core indicators across the dimensions of well-being where harmonisation and improved international comparability is feasible;
- (c) Clarify the typology and provide definitions;
- (d) Provide guidance on calculation methods, measurement challenges and data sources, including utilisation of (new) data sources and ways to improve timeliness;
- (e) Provide guidance and examples of good practices in dissemination and communication of current well-being measures.

14. In developing the guidelines, the Task Force should consider existing frameworks and materials relevant for measuring well-being, including the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, the OECD framework for measuring well-being and progress and Eurostat's quality of life indicators. The guidelines should give leeway for national frameworks to adapt to country needs and allow inclusion of country specific indicators.

15. The guidelines should be forward looking. In the drafting of the guidelines, it will be important to coordinate with ongoing work, including on Beyond GDP and the SDGs. The Task Force should also take into consideration the work on measuring well-being in the update of the SNA and other relevant materials.

16. To solicit further information and inputs from countries, the Task Force should consider organising a seminar for national experts to share experiences and good practices in measuring current well-being.

17. The Task Force is planned to present its full report at the February 2025 meeting of the Bureau. The Task Force will finalize the report based on comments from the Bureau and will take into consideration feedback received from the electronic consultation among all CES members. Subject to Bureau approval and positive outcomes of the consultation, the report will be submitted to the 2025 CES plenary session for endorsement.

## V. TIMETABLE

18. The activities of the Task Force will follow the tentative timetable below.

Oct 2023	Establishing the Task Force
Oct 2023 – Jan 2024	Drafting and agreeing on an outline of the guidelines
Jan – May 2024	Drafting of the guidelines
May 2024	Deadline for the first version of draft chapters
Jun 2024	Seminar on production of well-being indicators and face-to-face Task Force meeting (back-to-back)
Jun – Oct 2024	Further drafting of the guidelines
Oct 2024	Deadline for the second version of draft chapters
Oct – Dec 2024	Review of chapters and merging into one document

Jan 2025	Submit final draft report to the CES Bureau meeting in February 2025
Feb – Apr 2025	Subject to the decision of the Bureau, conduct written consultation with CES member countries and organisations
May 2025	Submit final report to the CES plenary session in June for endorsement
Jun 2025	Presentation of the final report to the CES plenary session
Jun – Aug 2025	Incorporation of comments received, editing and formatting for publication

## **VI. METHODS OF WORK**

19. The Task Force will primarily work via email and online meetings. UNECE will create a wiki page for exchange of materials. It is proposed to have a face-to-face meeting of the Task Force back-to-back with the proposed seminar in June 2024.

## **VII. MEMBERSHIP**

20. The following countries and organisations have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Armenia, Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, OECD, UNICEF, UNSD and Leiden University (Netherlands). Israel has agreed to chair the Task Force. Other CES members and international organizations are welcome to express their interest to become a member of the Task Force.

21. UNECE will act as Secretariat to the Task Force.

## **VIII. PROPOSAL TO THE BUREAU**

**22. The Bureau is invited to review and approve the terms of reference.**

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