I. **Background**

1. The environment in which official statistics operate has changed significantly over the last twenty years. Due to developments in digital technology, the number of alternative data providers has grown and new communication platforms such as social media have changed the way people look for and consume information.

2. Statistical offices have to rethink their approach and methods for communicating with data users and the public. A strategic framework would be very useful in this context. The concept of a strategic approach to the communication of official statistics is relatively new for most National Statistical Organisations (NSOs), who have traditionally focussed more effort on dissemination practices. However, in this increasingly competitive environment, an effective communications strategy is essential for maintaining the relevance of official statistics. NSOs need to consistently and clearly communicate their values, purpose and differentiators through a strategic approach to communications.

II. **Project objectives**

3. The objectives of this project are:

   a. To provide NSOs tools and increase their capacity to review and renew their communication approach, methods, and process and to develop a strategic approach to communication.

   b. To provide NSOs tools to increase their visibility, relevance, and brand recognition.

   c. To provide NSOs tools to take a proactive approach to managing issues and reputation.

III. **Scope**

4. The project will focus on enabling NSOs to modernise their communications at the strategic level. It will help organisations to look at communications strategies in broader risk management and business continuity contexts. This project aims to change the way of thinking about the role and importance of strategic communications in NSOs.
5. There is a distinction between strategy and tactics for communication. The project will not cover communication tactics nor provide guidance in producing specific communication products.

6. The project team will use their expertise, input from other experts, and information collected from NSOs to draft practical guidelines on the topics covered by the work packages that will be made available online. The guidelines produced by the project will include best practices and case studies from countries.

7. The project will take into account the work done on communication by other organisations (for example, Eurostat and OECD). In particular, the project will seek to ensure that it complements and does not duplicate the Eurostat project for Digital Communication, User analytics and Innovative products (DIGICOM).

IV. Contents

8. This project will comprise the following three work packages:

*Work Package 1: Guidelines on the Strategic Communications Development Process*

9. This work package will increase the ability of NSOs to take a strategic approach to communication. The work package will develop a toolkit based on best practices and case studies that will include:

   a. Guidelines on the strategic communications development process (including public environment assessment; positioning; identification of the organization’s values and strengths; identification of communications objectives and principles; identification of issues and challenges; organisational strategic alignment; definition of performance objectives and indicators; evaluation mechanisms; and creating the plan).

   The guidelines will also include successful methods and approaches to engage with various audiences and gain traction in the public domain (with stakeholders, expert and novice data users; news media; the public).

   b. Guidance on how to measure success and impact of communications.

*Work Package 2: Best Practices on Defining a Position in the New Communications Environment*

10. In the increasingly challenging communications environment, NSOs need to rethink the way they approach communications both within the organization and with the outside world. This work package will provide NSOs the tools to increase awareness among staff of the importance of communications, sending out a common message and ensuring that the organisation is perceived in the desired manner. It will also give NSOs tools to help them
understand the communications environment and improve their ability to first define their desired position and then to achieve that position.

11. The work package will develop generic guidance on how NSOs can position themselves in a changing communications environment. This may include issues such as building a brand. It is anticipated that this work package will benefit from the outputs of the DIGICOM work on user perception of NSOs brands.

**Work Package 3: Guidelines on Issue and Reputation Management**

12. This work package will improve the ability of NSOs to identify issues that can potentially damage their reputation and help them take a proactive approach to issue management. The work package will develop a generic guidance document, which will include guidance on issue identification; internal and external communications protocols (e.g. who says what, when and how); writing holding statements, Q&A development; scenario planning; spokesperson training and preparation; and the use of external expertise as appropriate.

V. **Resourcing**

13. The table below shows an estimate of the resources and potential costs involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Package</th>
<th>Resources (estimate)</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Other costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP-1</td>
<td>9 person months</td>
<td>Volunteer NSOs plus UNECE Secretariat</td>
<td>Possible travel costs for Sprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP-2</td>
<td>5 person months</td>
<td>Volunteer NSOs plus UNECE Secretariat</td>
<td>Possible travel costs for external expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP-3</td>
<td>3 person months</td>
<td>Volunteer NSOs plus UNECE Secretariat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>9 person months</td>
<td>A project manager working with the UNECE Secretariat. Input from Executive Board and HLG members (in their role as project sponsors)</td>
<td>Travel costs for project events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26 person months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. **Timeframe**

14. The project will aim to complete the activities described by the end of 2018. All work packages will start simultaneously and run for the full period of the project.

VII. **Governance**
15. The project sponsor is the HLG. This is the group that has ultimate responsibility for signing off the project deliverables. In practice, this responsibility will be delegated to the Executive Board. A project manager will have day-to-day responsibility for running the project, providing regular updates and signaling any issues to the Executive Board as necessary.

16. Work will be mainly via electronic communication (email, wiki and webex). Face-to-face or virtual sprints can be organized as needed. Other HLG meetings and workshops will be used to facilitate additional face-to-face meetings or to generate discussion. The project team will seek guidance from the Modernisation Groups in the areas of their responsibilities.