



High-level Seminar on Strategic Partnerships in Official Statistics

(Geneva, 11 – 12 April 2018)

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

1. The High-level Seminar on Strategic Partnerships in Official Statistics took place on 11 – 12 April in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. The objective of the Seminar was to bring together heads and senior managers of national and international statistical organisations, as well as representatives of current and potential partners, to discuss how to create and maintain the new types of strategic partnerships that are needed to meet the challenges facing the statistical community. The seminar focussed on practical experiences, case studies and lessons learned.
3. It was attended by participants from Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom. Eurostat, PARIS21, the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, the European Group of the United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe), the Humanitarian Open Streetmap Team, GOPA Consultants, and Microsoft were also represented.
4. Ms. Sylvie Michaud (Statistics Canada) was elected chair of the Seminar.
5. Mr Anil Arora, Chief Statistician of Canada, gave the opening keynote speech. He stressed the challenges and opportunities presented by the sustainable development goals. He outlined the different types of partnerships needed to meet these challenges, and concluded with three questions to be considered during the seminar:
 - a) How can we best convince non-traditional partners of the value of an intended partnership with an NSO (what's in it for them / win-win)?
 - b) How can we collectively forge a clear path forward to seize partnership opportunities while at the same time address the practical concerns of statistical offices engaging in partnership work?
 - c) What do we have to do as leaders to support our staff in building the perspectives and competencies to make the creation and nurturing of partnerships a standard element in our daily routine?
6. Mr Tjark Tjin-a-Tsoi, the Director General of Statistics Netherlands, gave a keynote speech at the start of the second day of the seminar, where he outlined the changing requirements of users,

and the need to move from a survey mentality, and to focus on the provision of answers to questions. He challenged statistical organisations to clarify their ambitions and their core assets, and stressed the need to think big and build small, to think globally and innovate locally.

7. The agenda was prepared by an organising committee comprising Canada, Mexico, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Eurostat, PARIS21 and UNECE. It contained the following substantive topics:

- a) Partnerships with Policy Makers
- b) Supplier / Recipient Partnerships – With a Focus on Citizens
- c) Open Innovation and Co-creation Partnerships
- d) Partnerships in the Context of Geospatial Information.
- e) The Way Forward

Key outcomes and next steps

8. The main points highlighted during the Seminar included:

- Open and transparent partnerships with policy makers can help reinforce the independence of a statistical organisation. Independence should not mean isolation
- Enabling legislation is important for some types of partnership, particularly where data are shared. It would be useful to share examples of where legislation helps or hinders partnerships
- The requirements for statistics for the SDGs encourages the formation of partnerships
- There were mixed views on the value of distinguishing between “official statistics” and “experimental statistics”
- The need to innovate is an important driver for partnerships. Statistical organisations should decide where and how they want to innovate, then select partners accordingly
- Partnerships are a means to an end, not an end in themselves
- A framework for innovative partnerships could be defined, together with a maturity model
- The need for partnerships should be reflected in and linked to the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organisations (GAMSO) and the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)
- More work on a taxonomy of partnership types could be useful, though this may vary depending on the purpose it is required for
- Several national statistical organisations are starting to take a wider role in coordinating cross-government data assets and infrastructures, this often involves new partnerships
- Partnerships involve risk. However, risks should be actively managed, not avoided, otherwise opportunities will be lost. NSOs should create frameworks that enable staff to manage risks. Diversifying partnerships can help to mitigate risks
- Partnerships with users may serve two purposes: to learn about new demands and to enable appropriate use of statistical data include quality assessment
- The statistical community should develop a strategy for creating and maintaining partnerships

- The statistical community should develop principles and guidelines for money flows in partnerships
- There is a lack of general public knowledge about the roles and activities of NSOs. Communication to potential partners should be enhanced
- Partnerships can provide an opportunity to spread statistical standards beyond the official statistics community
- Statistical organisations have a lot to offer potential partners. Data, experience, credibility and reputation are core assets. We should not be too timid in approaching partners
- Alternative data flow models, such as processing at the source, can reduce confidentiality constraints
- A structured way to share good and bad experiences, and lessons learned, would be useful
- Partnerships can enhance the roles of statistical organisations in society, and demonstrate relevance
- The international statistical community could widen its role to become the international statistical and data community
- Partnerships with global organisations can benefit from global coordination, but local execution
- Sub-national statistics, e.g. at city level, are becoming more important, and require local partners
- In many organisations, culture and capabilities need to change to facilitate the creation of partnerships. There is a need to develop partnership negotiation competencies
- International standards for service provision could be useful to facilitate partnerships with consultants
- Trusted third parties and “zones of trust” can facilitate partnerships involving data transfer
- Exchanges of staff can facilitate mutual understanding between partners
- National statistical organisations and national mapping agencies are natural partners as both are keepers of authoritative and trustworthy data
- Informal contacts at top management level are important to establish partnerships and set objectives and priorities
- A memorandum of understanding can be a very useful tool to establish roles and responsibilities, but does not need to be too long or technical. It could be useful to share key elements of such memorandums

9. The organising committee was asked to prepare a paper identifying, in a structured way, the main ideas and areas for possible future activities at the international level. This would include principles and a framework for creating strategic partnerships, a mechanism to share good practices, a maturity model, and a description of the core assets that can make statistical organisations attractive to partners. This paper should be presented for discussion at the October 2018 meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians. The Bureau will then decide on next steps.

Further information

10. Presentations from the Seminar are available at <https://statswiki.unece.org/x/GQGvCgh>.