

Proposal for ML Group 2023

The [ONS-UNECE ML Group 2022](#) is an international platform for research collaboration, knowledge exchange and capability building on machine learning for official statistics. It brings together almost 400 members from statistical organisations in 45 different countries to explore how ML can improve statistical output and be integrated successfully into production.

The group was formed in 2019 as a modernisation project of the UNECE Higher Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics and has since continued due to high demand from the official statistics community. ONS and UNECE provide the central coordination while activities are proposed and run by members themselves. They include working together on exploratory research projects, participating in discussion forums to share technical knowledge and experience, and hosting regular expert presentations on ML innovations and implementation issues at statistical organisations.

The ML Group has been a great success but maintaining and sustaining such a large community requires a substantial level of resources investment from ONS and UNECE. With re-prioritising of work within both organisations, ONS and UNECE need to scale back their involvement.

The following are three options suggested as an exit plan for the consideration of HLG-MOS EB:

Option 1

This option assumes that ONS and UNECE identify an organisation who is ready to lead the community and take on central coordination duties, and that ONS and UNECE still have some resources available for supporting activities. This would be the best case scenario as it would ensure the community can maintain momentum with existing projects and continue to achieve most of its current objectives without significant scaling back.

Core Activities

The new organiser would be expected to lead on the following duties, with support from the UNECE, ONS, organising committee members, and group membership:

- Monthly Meeting – *select speakers, appoint chair, send out meeting invitations, record meeting, update website with presentations and recording.*
- Discussion Forum – *monitor content on Slack channel; make one new posting every two days – encourage/remind members to post.*
- Website – *update with news of group activities, presentations + activity reports.*
- Membership Administration – *promote group membership – register new members – set up website access – maintain membership list*
- Activity Proposal Call – *invite NSOs to sponsor & run specific research and knowledge exchange activities for next 6-12 months (Theme Groups) – advertise groups and activities to members – support set-up of groups and activities - track progress – compile report + post to website*

Optional Activities

Depending on resources it could also take on the following duties:

- Send out newsletter every 2-3 months – *compile newsletter - focus on useful training courses and official statistics case studies*

- Coffee and Coding online training – (in partnership with Regional Hubs)
- End of year webinar

Administration

- Set up small committee of most active members - with institutional backing – to take on specific activities. (eg put together a monthly meeting, run a research activity)
Include reps from hub countries + UNSD
- Report back to UNECE AMMDS - have rep attending those meetings

Resources

- 2.5 days per week of 1-2 staff members
- Access to UNECE website and Slack channel

Potential candidates to approach

- ABS
- IStat
- CBS Netherlands
- Stats Poland
- Stats Canada
- Switzerland FSO
- IMF
- OECD
- Eurostat

Option 2

This option assumes that ONS and UNECE cannot identify an organisation who is ready to lead the community and take on central coordination duties, but that ONS and UNECE still have some resources available for more limited activities. This option would prioritise sustaining the community that has been built, but reduce the scope of activities significantly.

Core activities would include:

- Biannual newsletter on ML developments in official statistics (ONS to compile)
- Maintain membership list, ML inbox and website.
- Quarterly meetings arranged by UNECE and ONS.
- Find slot for ML Group work at existing conference and invite members to participate
 - eg UNECE workshop June 2023 (with focus on people who are unfamiliar with ML)

Governance

- ONS-UNECE would report quarterly to the HLG MoS EB.

Option 3

This option assumes that ONS and UNECE cannot identify an organisation who is ready to lead the community and take on central coordination duties, and that neither ONS nor UNECE have resources available even for more limited activities. However, it is expected that some functions of the ML Group could be carried out by new international initiatives, albeit in more limited scope. Bodies that might be able to take on specific functions include: Eurostat (knowledge sharing); UN Regional Hubs (ML-related capacity building); HLG-MOS ADSMM (research collaboration), and UN CEBD (strategy / identifying opportunities and gaps.

In this scenario, both ONS and UNECE would need to wind up all existing activities:

- Write final report for presentation at HLG MoS meeting in November
- Upload Theme Group activity reports
- Archive website
- Store membership list according to data policies
- Identify organisation that will be best point of contact for ML in official statistics
- Set up address for any queries about ML Group's past work

Timeline

| Complete by | Action | Responsible |
|----------------|--|------------------|
| 23-August | Update HLG MoS EB, request feedback on plans | Eric, InKyung |
| 30-August | Approach organisations to take on group (Option1) | Eric, Taeke. EB |
| 16-September | Decide on best option | Eric, Taeke, EB |
| 21-September | Monthly ML Group meeting – initial update on plans for next year | Alison, InKyung |
| 21-September | Inform leads of relevant international and regional initiatives (Option 3) | Eric, Taeke |
| 27-September | Secure approval from HLG MoS EB for decision | Eric, Taeke |
| 28-September | Inform ML Group, ONS | Alison |
| 21 November | Complete transition / close arrangements | Alison / InKyung |
| 22-23 November | Final report to HLG MoS workshop | Eric |

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|-------------|--|-------------------------|
| 30 November | End of year ML Group webinar | Alison / InKyung / Eric |
| 7 December | ML Group meeting – next year plans or farewell gathering | Alison / InKyung |