



# LAUNCH OF THE UNESCO CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION DATA AND STATISTICS

TOWARDS AN INSTITUTIONALIZED COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM  
FOR POLICY ADVICE, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PEER  
LEARNING FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE  
AMONG EDUCATION STATISTICIANS

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FEBRUARY 2024

2024 CONFERENCE ON  
**EDUCATION DATA  
AND STATISTICS**

## I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is the statistical branch of UNESCO, and the United Nations depository for global statistics in education, science and technology, culture and communication, and serves accordingly as the official and trusted source of internationally comparable data in these areas. The Institute produces a wide range of indicators in UNESCO's fields of action by working with national statistical offices, line ministries and other statistical organizations in member states. As the statistical agency of UNESCO, the UIS has functional autonomy and applies rigorous professional standards to produce high-quality data, methodologies and standards.

2. Within the context of UN system-wide endeavours over the period 2015-2030 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNESCO has responsibility for coordinating action on SDG-4 - Education 2030, implemented through the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) to serve as the global apex body of all global education actors that have agreed to work cooperatively in pursuit of the Agenda. The international community has tasked the UIS to develop the methodologies, standards and indicators needed to achieve this goal, as well as key targets in science and innovation, culture and communication, in close cooperation with partners. Two Sherpas of the SDG 4 HLSC, who co-chair the Technical Committee of Functional Area 2 on data and monitoring, participate as observers in the TCG and will act as liaisons with the global education cooperation mechanism.

3. Under its Mid Term Strategy for 2022-2029, Cross-cutting function C « Brokerage, dissemination and policy use », the UIS is continuing in its leadership role in education measurement by convening the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on the indicators for SDG-4 Education 2030 for which it provides the secretariat. The TCG serves as the platform for member states to refine and develop the indicator framework while forging the consensus needed to mobilize efforts to address the measurement challenges. In doing so, it seeks inter alia to strengthen the governance mechanisms in place. It is currently the main « platform to discuss and develop the indicators used to monitor the Education 2030 agenda in an open, inclusive and transparent manner ».

4. In 2021, under the leadership of the TCG Co-Chairs – the Director of the UIS and the Director of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report – the TCG decided to facilitate a wider debate on key issues to capitalize on recent progress, clarify current matters and set a future agenda for education statistics. Therefore, the Secretariat of the TCG is working on establishing the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics envisioned as a mechanism for education statisticians from all over the world to regularly communicate, discuss, and reach consensus on key issues regarding education indicator measurement as well as the impact of technological and other developments and the ways to benefit from them.

5. Unlike its sister field of labour statistics, education statistics has not benefited from a regular, open forum where such major questions about the present and the future of internationally comparable data can be explored. It is therefore the appropriate moment for a wider debate on key issues to capitalize on recent progress, clarify current issues and set a future agenda for education statistics. Following a decision of the TCG, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in collaboration with the Global Education Monitoring Report, is therefore organizing the first meeting of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics to fill this gap and serve the following purposes:

- Establish the process for an international community of practice among education statisticians and the indicators' governance mechanism;
- Communicate, discuss, and reach consensus on key issues regarding concepts, definitions, methodologies, and operational aspects of SDG 4 indicator measurement in the form of recommendations and guidelines for adoption as international standards to improve comparability.
- Debate the impact of technological developments on education statistics and ways in which the community of education statisticians can benefit from opportunities and address challenges.

## II. VISION AND PURPOSE

6. The proposed UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics shall provide an inclusive, open, transparent, and expert international forum for monitoring, advising and

steering the international community's efforts to develop the methodologies, standards and indicators needed to achieve the goals of SDG 4 - Education 2030 and future international education agendas. It shall meet at regular intervals (in principle every three years) in accordance with need and shall be convened in accordance with the rules and regulations of UNESCO.

### III. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

7. The UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics shall be organized, under the general classification of meetings convened by UNESCO, as a Category IV international congress, by the Director-General of UNESCO, acting through the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and in coordination with the Assistant Director-General of the UNESCO Education Sector. The secretariat of the Commission shall be provided by the UIS. Working languages will be English and French as a minimum, but other working languages of UNESCO (Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Spanish) will be provided additionally where appropriate and feasible.

8. UNESCO Member States shall be invited to nominate three participants, one each from the education ministry, the national statistical office, and the national learning assessments agency. In addition, representatives from the following constituencies will be invited: regional statistical agencies and organizations; United Nations, specialized agencies, and other official international organizations; non-governmental organizations and the teaching profession.

9. Planning for the meetings of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics shall be carried out by the Director of the UIS, acting on behalf of the UNESCO Director-General, upon the recommendation of the TCG and the UIS Governing Board, in accordance with need.

10. Meetings of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics shall be preceded, where possible and appropriate, by regional preparatory meetings with the aim of finalizing agenda topics.

11. The UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics outputs shall be of two types: a) recommendations addressed to the UNESCO Director-General, and b) decisions on education statistics methodologies and good practices for follow-up by Member States' own statistical

communities. The UNESCO Director-General shall communicate the results of the work of the Conference as appropriate to UNESCO's Governing Bodies, and, where necessary, to the United Nations (including but not limited to the UN Statistical Division, ECOSOC, the UN General Assembly), according to established reporting lines.

#### **IV. TECHNICAL COOPERATION GROUP**

12. The TCG shall make recommendations to UNESCO/UIS concerning the date of the following meeting, ensure the substantive preparation of each meeting (including all new proposals relating to education statistics standards, guidelines, and models) and the finalization of the draft agenda, including proposals for inclusion of items emanating from the regional preparatory meetings. During the period of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics meetings, the chairs of the working groups of the TCG shall, in conjunction with the meeting's elected officers (Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur) serve as the Bureau of the Conference and in this regard take all necessary steps to ensure smooth and efficient proceedings and examine draft decisions and recommendations before their submission to plenary for adoption.

13. The TCG, as the platform to discuss and develop the indicators used for monitoring the Education 2030 targets in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner, will continue as the primary body for the coordination of the global education data and statistics. The TCG, renamed as the Education Data and Statistics Commission, will take forward the recommendations of the Conference on Education Data and Statistics (or EDS Conference) between its sessions. The Education Data and Statistics Commission (EDS Commission) will share the report presented to the SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) through its Functional Area 2 on data and monitoring on the follow up of the recommendations of the EDS Conference in the subsequent session. The revised terms of reference of the TCG are shared for information of the EDS Conference in a separate document.

## V. STRUCTURE OF THE UNESCO CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION DATA AND STATISTICS

14. The UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics shall meet in plenary and in public. The Secretariat may also propose several side events to take place parallel to the Conference proper. Although not required under the UNESCO standard classification of meetings for Category IV congresses, it is recommended by the UNESCO Secretariat that the Conference nevertheless adopt rules of procedure to enhance its work. A proposed set of such rules is presented in a separated document.

15. It is furthermore suggested by the UNESCO Secretariat that, for its inaugural meeting, a special procedure be adopted for the election of the meeting's chairperson. Accordingly, the Chairperson of the UIS Governing Board, after consultation with the UIS Director and the members of the TCG, would open the meeting, launch the Conference, and immediately put forward to the floor the launch of the conference and the adoption of the rules of procedures.

16. Once the rules of procedures have been adopted the Chairperson of the UIS Governing Board shall immediately put forward to the floor the nomination for the position of Chairperson, whose name would be chosen from among the most senior participants in attendance. Once approved by the plenary, it is proposed that she/he immediately assumes the chairpersonship and proceeds to the election of the other Conference officers (two Vice Chairs and a Rapporteur) and to the adoption of the draft agenda.

## VI. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

17. The funding for the preparation and holding of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics will be foreseen in accordance with the biennial Programme and Budget of UNESCO adopted by its General Conference.

## VII. DRAFT DECISION

18. Participants of the UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics may wish to adopt a decision endorsing the contents of the present proposals on governance and the draft text presented for the rules of procedure, as follows:

The UNESCO Conference on Education Data and Statistics,

1. Having considered the proposals presented by the Secretariat concerning the governance arrangements, vision, purpose and operating principles of the Conference;
2. Expresses its appreciation to UNESCO and its Institute for Statistics for initiating this new series of conferences;
3. Shares the view that such conferences are necessary and should be conducive to greater international coordination in the field of education data and statistics and enhanced progress towards the relevant international sustainable development goals;
4. Endorses the governance proposals and operating principles set out this document;
5. Adopts the proposed Rules of Procedure attached to the documentation.