


## GSS International collaboration guidance and checklist

This checklist and background information is to help you to make the right strategic choices about international activity. It will help to keep international activity across the GSS well coordinated and focused on value for money and our strategic priorities.

Decision-making and planning	
<p><b>1. Does the activity support a priority for your business area, department, or the GSS?</b></p>	
<p><b>2. Is there a possibility of mutual benefits for all participants?</b> eg never assume that the UK has nothing to learn from any particular country or organisation – developing countries may be leapfrogging us in certain areas.</p>	
<p><b>3. Does the activity support the development of long term strategic partnerships for the UK statistical system?</b> ie with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eurostat, EU Member States or potential ones [<b>these are all GSS priorities</b>]</li> <li>• Statistical agencies of the OECD or UN, and countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, China, Brazil, Mexico, India.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Does the activity support the Department for International Development's (DFID) statistical capacity building priorities?</b> See further guidance (page 6).</p>	
<p><b>5. Does the activity support the UK Government's foreign policies?</b> See further guidance (page 7).</p>	
<p><b>6. Are there significant costs or risks for either your Department or the UK associated with non-participation?</b></p>	
<p><b>7. Is your business area best placed to efficiently deliver the activity?</b> eg the OECD, Eurostat, other EU Member States, or another government department may be able to help or lead.</p>	

Evaluation	Comments
<p><b>1. Were concrete results achieved?</b> eg improvements to business processes What were they for your partners? What were they for you? How will they be implemented and maintained?</p>	
<p><b>2. Are there any other business areas, departments, other organisations that might like to know about your work? How will you share the knowledge with them?</b></p>	
<p><b>3. Is it useful to maintain the relationship, and how best can you achieve this with the resources available?</b></p>	
<p><b>4. Was the activity value for money?</b> eg how do the real costs incurred compare with those originally planned, taking into account any cost savings delivered by 1. above?</p>	

## International collaboration checklist – user notes:

1. International activity should be consistent with the [GSS International Strategy](#) ‘Making a World of a Difference’. The checklist is designed to help you achieve this. The more positive the answers, the stronger the business case.
2. For further advice or help with cross-GSS or international coordination of your activities please contact the International Relations team in the National Statistician’s Office at [international@statistics.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:international@statistics.gsi.gov.uk). Further guidance is also available below.
3. Note that generating income from international activity is not in itself a priority. The opportunity costs of staff time and other resources that could be spent on domestic priorities should be assessed and considered.
4. Beware of requests from profit-making organisations. It is legitimate to only consider requests for assistance that come from the governments of other countries (including their statistical agencies) or inter-governmental statistical agencies, such as those of the OECD or United Nations.
5. After completing the activity try to spend some time considering the evaluation questions, or for larger projects you may want to consider them at planned review points. The answers may help you focus on maximising benefits and feed into future decision-making.

**Please report your experiences to the GSS International Relations Team** if possible, via your International Liaison Officer (ILO)\*, even where you turned a request down. The international collaboration checklist could be used as a template. There is an interest in what went well and not so well, so lessons can be shared across the GSS. This information will also feed into the development of the international strategy by the GSS International Committee.

---

\*Each GSS Department, and in ONS each Directorate, has an International Liaison Officer (ILO). The ILO for your area can be found [here](#). The International Relations Team contacts your ILO on a regular basis for information about your business area’s international activity.

## Strategic guidance for international collaboration

### Why is there GSS-wide guidance on international collaboration now?

Recent political, financial, technological and statistical developments, both domestically and internationally have driven a review of GSS strategy. As a result the **GSS strategy** 'Building the Community' and the related **GSS international strategy** 'Making a World of a Difference' seek effective international collaboration as follows:



#### 'Making a World of a Difference' - a summary of the GSS International strategy

The GSS should:

- form **better targeted international partnerships**
- **optimise our influence** on international developments that affect the UK
- better **understand what we need to learn, and how best to learn it**, from international partners
- aim to be **world leaders in domestic and international coordination** of our international activity
- be focused on **value for money**



**Priority:**

- we must work constructively with Member States and the European Commission (Eurostat) to achieve the best outcomes for both the UK and the EU as a whole and ensure we plan effectively to deliver on our legal obligations

**General:**

- use international activity to reinforce the domestic reputation of the UK statistical system, develop our domestic statistical system, GSS staff and GSS outputs, or to improve the international comparability of statistics available to our users
- play a leading, influential, positive and constructive role within the key international institutions of the ESS, OECD and UN, and in developing international statistical policies and methods that will affect the UK in the future
- a prioritised and strategic approach to helping other countries to develop their statistical systems, with a focus on shifting our approach to mutual learning activities

## Essentials for collaboration within the European Statistical System (ESS)

### Working Groups

1. **The GSS should be represented at all ESS Working Group meetings** (nb they are not 'Eurostat' meetings as commonly known – Eurostat organise the meetings on behalf of Member States (MSs), and it is for MSs to work together to get the best outcome for MSs.
2. Working Group attendees should ensure that their **lines of argument have been cleared by senior civil servants and other GSS departments have been consulted** where necessary. The outcomes could have massive implications in the future.
3. **Good records should be kept** of Working Group meetings, including the key arguments made by the UK representative, other countries, Eurostat and other institutions such as the European Central Bank (ECB). **A template** is attached on page 10, to help you feedback to the International Relations Team.
4. **UK participation in ESS Task Forces that work on developing aspects of a future regulation is encouraged.**
5. UK participants at Working Groups should **seek training and advice** on working within the ESS from the International Relations Team.

### Being influential in the ESS

The **27 members of the EU** are eligible to vote on statistical legislation. Eurostat's **vision for the ESS** aims to change the way the ESS functions. The UK is generally supportive of the principles of the ESS vision. But we must be active and influential in driving developments in our interests, and make sure we only get involved where we are sure that benefits are deliverable and outweigh the costs. Much of it will be delivered through ESSnet projects and Vision Implementation Projects (VIPs). Separate advice is available from the National Statistician's Office on these projects and our approach to the Vision in general.

Collaborations with other Member States and Eurostat may also help GSS influence in the ESS by building strong relationships, reputation and influence with some of the key players in the ESS, especially with Eurostat and those countries who may hold similar views to the UK (NSO can advise) – but never assume you know the positions of other countries, find out and negotiate! **A positive, friendly, and constructive approach is always essential.** The ESS has developed as a genuine partnership of equals and GSS members should foster this – it is far more useful than a conflictual atmosphere.

## What are DFID's priorities?

DFID works directly in 27 priority **countries** across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Statistical capacity building requires long-term, strategic and coordinated support. **If you are considering collaboration with any of these countries you should either contact DFID GSS members directly or the International Relations Team in the National Statistician's Office.**

In DFID, Statistical Capacity Building is carried out through two main channels: direct bilateral programmes and multilateral initiatives. DFID in-country statisticians work with countries to design, implement, and monitor **National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)**. Among the six coalition priorities that make up the DFID business plan are commitments to:

- support actions to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- strive for transparency, value for money and open government
- strengthen governance in fragile and conflict affected states

### Further background on DFID's statistical capacity building work

A National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is expected to provide a country with a strategy for developing statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system (NSS). It enables developing countries to build a reliable statistical system that produces the data necessary to design, implement, and monitor national development policies and programmes.

DFID also helps countries to meet their regional and international commitments with respect to statistics, such as reporting progress against the MDGs. After the World Bank and European Union, DFID is the third-biggest donor in the world for Statistical Capacity Building. DFID works to improve the quality of statistics in partner countries through a number of multilateral programmes, and more broadly to build a more comprehensive, coherent and relevant global statistical system.

DFID support is informed by the new **Busan Action Plan for Statistics**. DFID works closely with country/regional statisticians as well as in partnership with others across DFID, Whitehall and the international system, to achieve change. One of the international partners DFID work with is the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21) which is a consortium of statisticians and development policy makers that help developing statistical systems create a NSDS.

For further information please see DFID's Business Plan 2012-2105:  
[www.DFID.gov.uk/Documents/DFIDbusiness-plan2012.pdf](http://www.DFID.gov.uk/Documents/DFIDbusiness-plan2012.pdf)

## Which countries are important to UK foreign policy, and why should the GSS care?

One of the key priorities from the current **FCO business plan** is building Britain's prosperity.

Among the actions planned to support this priority are:

1. Coordinate more effective cross-government engagement with **emerging powers** and key selected countries including China, India, Turkey and many others across all continents.
2. Pursue an active British policy in Europe and the EU to protect and advance British national interests including **supporting accession to the EU** for: Croatia, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, (FYR) Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.

Many of countries /regions of policy interest to FCO are not places where DFID has statisticians on the ground but most will have statistical systems less developed than the GSS and collaboration may qualify as Official Development Assistance.

However, **if you are considering offering assistance to non-DFID, or non-GSS priority countries, it is recommended that you contact the FCO Desk Officer (DO)** for that country, for their perspective (contact the **FCO switchboard** for DO contact details).

From a GSS perspective:

- for the **EU enlargement countries, there is a direct synergy** with building GSS influence in the ESS partly because if and when these countries join they will be able to vote on EU statistical legislation
- for the **emerging powers**, it is likely their statistical systems have or soon will leapfrog our own in some areas - to build relationships now may help us make use of their expertise in these areas in future
- **supporting the FCO's priorities** will help ensure overall value-for-money for the UK public purse and build an effective partnership with the FCO in pursuing the GSS' other international goals

Additionally, the UK Government is keen to get the most out of the **UK's membership of the OECD**, which is in itself a key partner for the GSS. Supporting this organisation is therefore important.

At any one time it may be important for the GSS to be supporting specific aspects of its work or particular members, or those countries seeking membership – but the politics can be complex and dynamic in this respect so please seek advice from the International Relations Team.

**An example** of effective international collaboration is on page 8.

## What are the GSS' other long term strategic partnerships?

The GSS has strong cultural links and mutually beneficial working relationships with the statistical systems of New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. We share many challenges and perspectives and should work to maintain these links, but, as these relationships already exist, it may be easier to collaborate more quickly and effectively with these partners.

In the longer term, emerging economic powerhouses are rapidly developing sophisticated statistical systems that we can learn from, and as large and powerful countries they would be useful allies in getting what we require out of the global statistical system. Countries such as China, Brazil, and Mexico are strategically important partners for the GSS and, usefully, are also important partners for the UK as a whole.

The OECD and the United Nations are both crucial organisations in defining international frameworks for official statistics that affect what we do and in providing assistance to Member States in developing their statistics and their international comparability.

## An example of effective international collaboration

### Case study: Rachel Skeltenberry, ONS Strategy and Standards

"I run the Processing, Editing and Imputation team in Newport, The Annual Business Survey (ABS) is expensive to edit due to the large sample size. On other surveys we have implemented selective editing, which is a more efficient editing methodology. As the ABS has a large number of variables it is quite difficult to apply the simple method of selective editing that we use for other surveys to it. Therefore we needed an alternative.

Our director met the Statistics Sweden team, who had developed SELEKT, at a conference. The tool, a SAS based system which performs selective editing, seemed like it could solve our problems for ABS. Therefore we initially worked with Southampton University to test whether SELEKT could work on ABS, and the conclusion was that it could. However we had quite a few questions around the implementation.

To help us manage our queries, the SELEKT developers and users visited ONS to share their experiences of the tool but also to offer advice on our implementation. This was a valuable visit and we discovered better ways of implementing the tool on our data. The second visit to Statistics Sweden was organised to report back on progress with our implementation, and with some more questions from us and the IM team, who would be putting SELEKT into the system.

As a result of the collaboration, we developed our technical skills, learned a lot more about selective editing and the various ways that it could be implemented both in technical and practical terms. The Statistics Sweden team is very knowledgeable and it wasn't just selective editing knowledge that they passed on. We also got some feedback about Prices, which we passed on to our colleagues in ONS, and they talked us through their system redesign. We picked up information about data warehousing and Electronic Data Collection and this will become more useful as this project develops, and we will ensure that we keep in touch with Statistics Sweden on this subject.

To help keep in touch, every 18 months editing experts from around the world will meet up at the UNECE Work Session on Data Editing. I use this as an opportunity to catch up with other International Users of SELEKT to find out what their experiences have been. I also stay in regular contact with our Statistics Sweden colleagues to field GSS queries and to keep up-to-date with developments from other countries."



### After international activity

What can we learn from this case study? It achieved the following successful outcomes:

- the business area identified a weakness and international expertise that could help address the weakness
- initial scoping work was followed up by visits to solve specific technical problems
- concrete results were achieved and business processes improved
- connections were spotted and referred to other GSS business areas
- the relationship is being maintained and a process to ensure continued collaboration has been established

If you would like to share a case study on the International Knowledge Station – please contact:  
international@statistics.gov.uk

**International Relations Team, National Statistician's Office**

23 April 2013 (revised)

The [International Knowledge Station](#) on StatNet contains a wide range of tools and information to help you make the most out of international activity

**European Statistical System (ESS) Meeting Report**  
(or any other international meeting where you need to report back)

**GSS Department:**

**Meeting:** *[eg name of working group, task force, technical expert group, management group, standing committee etc]*

**Date of meeting:**

**UK Representation:** *[name of attending experts, title or role, division or branch and contact details]*

**1. Topics considered** - with reference to proposed regulations where appropriate

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**2. UK negotiating position** – opinion, negotiating remit and desired outcome [agreed at DD level]. nb Business areas will be required to assure the National Statistician/ONS DG that the financial implications of any Commission proposals have been properly assessed and incorporated into our negotiation position and forward planning for business area finances.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**3. Significant positions taken by ESS partners (Member States and Eurostat)** – and whether formally stated in the meeting or in discussions outside the main meeting

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**4. Summary of main points of the meeting** – this can be a bulleted list or a short report

**5. Cross cutting GSS issues** – any inter connections or issues which may impact other departments or the Devolved Administrations?

Please provide a copy of this form to the UK International Relations Team at [international@statistics.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:international@statistics.gsi.gov.uk)