

2nd Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Project: *Strengthening Capacity for Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Economic Resilience of CARICOM*

12 November 2024

Participants:

Delores Francis – OECS; Dejeanne Marie Catherine Serville; Sheldon Maclean; Maria Alejandra Ovalles – ECLAC; Timothy Odle -CARICOM; Nakeisha Morris London -Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Policy focal policy), Ekaterina Chernova, Nour Barnat, Dong Wu, Benny Salo, Denis Gervalle, Bruno Antunes; Petra Kynclova – UNCTAD.

Agenda:

- Agreeing on the agenda
- Any comments on the last meeting minutes?

Policy element:

- Priority sector to be analysed
- Confirmation of national focal points for the policy element of the project.

Statistics element:

- Testing of TiSSTAT system by countries
 - Timeframe
 - Who is testing. NSO statistical points and nominated IT specialists
 - Online workshop to assist countries to go through the testing phase
 - a. Timing
 - b. Content
- Related TiSSTAT documents available for countries
- A.O.B.

Discussion:

Policy element.

- **Key Points by Dong Wu:**
 - Proposed holding a dedicated meeting to address issues specific to Barbados, ensuring tailored support and strategic alignment.
 - Provided a recap of action items from the previous meeting's minutes:
 - Highlighted the request for conducting a mini Service Performance Review (SPR)-type study tailored for OECS countries.
 - Stressed the importance of input from individual countries to identify critical sectors for focused analysis. The idea is that proposed in-depth

analysis centered on enhancing service sector development and supporting export growth in identified key sectors. It should aim at strengthening economic resilience within the Eastern Caribbean Economic Union to promote sustainable growth.

- Directed questions to Dolores Francis regarding:
 - The progress made in pinpointing the sectors of interest for through analysis.
 - Identification of key policy focal points within Member States to support the study. The selection will depend on the identified analysis sector.
- **Update by Delores Francis (OECS Commission):**
 - Reported active engagement with Member States, noting that discussions are ongoing with feedback anticipated shortly.
 - Confirmed receipt of responses from three out of six Member States.
 - A deadline for final submissions set for the end of the current week (15 Nov) to expedite the selection process.
 - Preliminary sectors highlighted include:
 - Professional services, noted for their potential in regional economic integration.
 - Creative industries, showcasing cultural and economic significance.
 - The yachting sector, specifically highlighted by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.
- **Input from Sheldon Mclean:**
 - Reinforced the importance of building on past analyses that emphasized sectoral diversification to achieve sustainable economic growth.
 - Advocated for continued focus on the yachting and creative industries, given their unique regional strengths and growth potential.
 - Noted that professional services present opportunities for regional collaboration and long-term growth.
 - Highlighted the competitive advantage that the creative sector offers and its alignment with broader goals of capital services development.
 - Emphasized that targeted investments in these sectors could foster innovative growth and position the region as a leader in niche service areas.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Continue awaiting feedback from the remaining Member States to finalize sector identification.
 - Dolores to compile and circulate the refined policy advisory focus based on collective input.
 - Plan subsequent discussions to reach a consensus on which sectors will be prioritized for the upcoming study and related policy advisories.

Additional questions from Nakeisha Morris London (addressed off-line after the end of the meeting)

- Inquired about the expected timeline for collecting policy focal point names and sector(s), considering approaching busy season.

Answer:

- Wanted to know if policy recommendations would include comparisons and insights from countries in the OECS or with similar economic status that have successfully grown in chosen sectors, particularly through innovative strategies during challenging periods like the pandemic.

Answer:

- Statistics team plans to organise regular meetings with countries statisticians and IT people to discuss all arising technical issues (further below). If there a similar approach is planned for the policy side?

Answer:

Statistics element.

Based on the request expressed by Prunella at the last meeting, Statistics team prepared a set of documents and steps to take allowing countries to interact with and test TiSSTAT to evaluate its user-friendliness and logic.

Materials and instructions will be shared with both project and country focal points simultaneously to ensure coherence in the process.

- It is suggested holding monthly meetings with countries' statistical focal points and nominated IT experts from each country to ensure iterative progress on TiSSTAT.
- Intend to send out a guide and TiSSTAT individual exploration environments for countries by mid-next week (tentatively Wednesday, 20 Nov).
 - Countries will receive usernames and passwords to access a server.
 - The exploration environment will include English and French language settings, using "Antarctica" as a fictional domestic country.
 - A guide with five exploration paths will provide an overview of data collection and sampling modules.
 - Statistical focal points from each country, alongside nominated IT experts, will conduct testing.
- Proposed virtual workshops on **15–16 December**. The two-day virtual workshop will address any issues or questions identified during the testing phase:
 - **Day 1:** Address questions about the exercises and system functionality.
 - **Day 2:** Focus on data cleaning, analysis, and associated TiSSTAT modules.
 - Outcomes of these workshops will guide discussions at the follow up January meeting.

Followed discussion:

- There was a suggestion to move the **December meeting date** to January to ensure flexibility and to avoid conflicting with Member States' schedules. The goal is to share the platform with Member States and provide immediate training, ensuring they have enough time to engage with it before the next meeting.
- **TiSSTAT Pilot Countries:** Dolores Francis sought clarification on the approach to policy advisory services for OECS, asking if it would involve all Member States or select ones. Nour Barnat clarified that for the statistical pilot, at least four Member States were initially recommended.
- **Working Team:** There was confusion about the formation of a working team. Ekaterina Chernova explained that a working team for statistics would involve focal points and IT experts from each country to support the implementation of the platform. For policy-related matters, further clarification would be needed, but the technical team would meet regularly to address any issues.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Timothy Odle suggested ensuring that the statistics department and regional statistics team are involved in the discussions, as CARICOM is running a parallel initiative. The goal is for the OECS strategy and policy to align with CARICOM's broader regional policy. Later Mr. Odle shared the names from the statistics department and regional statistics that were added to the list of Steering Committee for future communication.

Next Steps:

- Contacting Prunela Charles-Williams from ECCB central bank and Nella Jules, statistics project focal point, to discuss the timeline and modalities of the statistical proposal for testing TiSSTAT and follow-up workshops.
- A meeting for the next Steering Committee will likely take place in early 2025, before discussions about an in-person event in the first quarter of 2025.