



3rd meeting of the Editorial Board on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST)

5 May 2023, Online

FINAL MINUTES

Item 1. Opening and round of introductions

Mr. Michel Dubreuil welcomed the participants and announced that he has been entrusted with the chairmanship of the MST Editorial Board.

Ms. Clara van der Pol gave a short briefing on MST work carried out in the last months. She recalled that, at its last meeting held on December 2022, the Expert Group on MST agreed on a roadmap for the finalization of the Statistical Framework for MST (SF-MST) in view of its submission to the UN Statistical Commission in 2024. The roadmap is being implemented step by step, and important progress has been made since the Expert Group meeting:

- On the consensus-building side, MST has received ongoing strong support from the UN Statistical Commission. Almost 20 countries worldwide plus the African region have recognized the relevance of MST.
- On the technical side, a round of consultation was launched among the Expert Group on MST in December 2022, that has been successful in terms of number of comments received and in terms of the variety of contributors, such as national statistical offices, ministries of tourism, sub-national tourism administrations, and international organizations. Several research teams dedicated to further develop certain areas of SF-MST have also been set-up.

The chair introduced the agenda and initiated the round of introductions (see the list of participants below).

Item 2. Mandate of the Editorial Board

The Chair recalled the key role of the MST Editorial Board in achieving the MST roadmap. The main activities are as follows:

- Provide guidance to the UNWTO Committee on Statistics in terms of management of SF-MST drafting and consultation process;
- Advise on the research agenda and tasks;
- Consider feedback from consultations on SF-MST;
- Recommend technical treatments for finalizing SF-MST in response to consultation feedback and ongoing research;
- Support and advocate for the SF-MST.

Item 3. Summary of comments received from the consultation

Mr. Carl Obst provided a briefing on the comments received from the consultation of the SF-MST version 3 (held from December 2022 to January 2023) and proposed a series of responses for Editorial Board consideration.

General comments received related to the structure of SF-MST, the concept of local tourism destination, the systems-based framing, the sustainability of individual tourism businesses, and indicators. In view of these comments, it is proposed that the Editorial Board consider the following solutions: maintain the national level as the primary focus of SF-MST while recognizing the importance of subnational level, provide conceptual guidance on indicators for comparability purposes, the discussion of subnational measurement to be put forward in the new chapter 2 and to be integrated in each sustainability dimensions chapters, introduce issues of resilience, risk, vulnerability, carrying capacity and thresholds, enrich the text on the systems-based approach, include a new section in the

economic chapter that covers the sustainability of tourism businesses and finally, include potential indicators for all sustainability dimensions while recognizing that the development of a set of indicators for international comparability purposes and country data reporting is a separate line of work.

Group discussion on the general comments and on the proposed solutions:

The Editorial Board expressed its appreciation of the general comments and proposed solutions.

The Editorial Board agreed that the main level of focus of SF-MST is the national level, while recognizing the importance of the subnational one. The members noted that the concept of local tourism destination is difficult to operationalize for international comparability purposes. From a statistical perspective, the members indicated that the use of administrative delineation is the most pragmatic and feasible one.

The Editorial Board reaffirmed that SF-MST should not include compilation guidance, this will be catered in another type of document. Still, some members voiced the need to include in the new version of SF-MST more guidance in terms of concepts, definitions, classifications, data organization structures and variables or indicators to be collected.

It was noted that a key learning from the Covid-19 pandemic is the issue of the degree of dependency on international tourism and suggested this issue to be discussed in SF-MST.

The Editorial Board also pointed out that the consideration of sustainability of individual tourism businesses should be rather limited in SF-MST and be catered in another type of document, such as the ESG framework for tourism businesses currently being developed by UNWTO in partnership with the Oxford University SDG Impact Lab and EasyJet Holidays.

On the Introduction, the main comments referred to the possibility to highlight further the policy relevance of sustainable tourism, to recognize SF MST as part of a broader information system, to describe further the value added of SF MST and to balance better the text to cater for statistical and policy audiences. It was proposed that the Editorial Board consider including all the comments, while noting that the SF-MST main audience is the statistical community and that it is not feasible to include all tourism sustainability issues in the document but that it could be complemented with a document more oriented to policy makers.

On the economic chapter, the main comments suggested to improve coherence with regards to the other sustainability dimensions, to incorporate additional material on a range of topics (especially government revenues and expenditures and tourism Gross Fixed Capital Formation), to incorporate text on the sustainability of tourism businesses and finally to enrich the text on the use of tourism ratios. In view of these comments, it was proposed that the Editorial Board consider the following solutions: (a) to include additional texts on the impact of major events, labour productivity, and on the indirect and induced effects, (b) to include new sections on government revenues and expenditure as well as tourism Gross Fixed Capital Formation.

On the environmental chapter, the comments referred to include a discussion of current policy themes (e.g. climate change, circular economy), improve discussion of biodiversity, ecosystems and green jobs, as well as adding text on the allocation of environmental stocks and flows (especially GHG emissions). It was proposed that the Editorial Board consider including all the comments. Additional text on current policy themes will be included and new sections will be developed on allocation of stocks and flows, biodiversity, ecosystems and green jobs.

On the social chapter, the comments related to the need to have stronger indication of what needs to be measured and collected and which indicators are relevant, to better highlight relevance of host communities and to build further the discussion of governance and its relevance. It was proposed that the Editorial Board consider including all the suggestions. The chapter will be strengthened to provide more concrete guidance on what social issues need to be measured and how this information should

be organized, in particular with regards to the perspective of the host communities, culture tourism, governance and decent work.

On the spatial chapter, the comments reflected on the need of definitions and methods for delineating sub-national areas, clarification between measurement at sub-national and national scales and expectations on measurement, incorporation of existing measurement materials (such as work by OECD, INRouTe, UNSD) and links to chapters on each of the dimensions. In view of these comments, it is proposed that the Editorial Board consider the following solutions: (a) to strengthen the coverage of relevant concepts, definitions and organization structures with the support of the MST Research Team created for that matter, (b) include sub-national measurement in the new chapter 2 and in each sustainability's dimensions chapters (instead of having a separate chapter on sub-national measurement).

Group discussion on the different chapters and on the proposed solutions:

The Editorial Board expressed its appreciation of the comments received on the different chapters and on the proposed solutions.

The Editorial Board agreed to reconsider and clarify the text on “culture tourism”, indicating the text should focus on the links between tourism and culture from a host community perspective as opposed to cultural tourism, which is a product.

Members also suggested to take advantage of existing statistical material on climate change, tourism's perception of local population and circular economy, notably for identifying and aligning relevant indicators that can be used for tourism.

The editorial board discussed the difficulty of identifying, measuring and securing international comparability of green jobs related to tourism activity--but that it should be covered to the extent possible in the framework. Work on identifying tourism characteristic occupations was considered a useful venue for exploration in general, and one that may help to shed light on the topic of green jobs related to tourism. The research team dedicated to occupations will explore the potential of bringing structure to tourism occupations and how far this can be treated within in the SF-MST in light of the existing work.

The Editorial Board highlighted the need to include more guidance in the economic chapter on government revenues and expenditure, considering as well government related transfers, as well as tourism Gross Fixed Capital Formation.

Members noted the importance of describing issues related to seasonality, noting that is not only an issue for the economic dimension but also connected to the social dimension (“overtourism” during peak season) and it should be considered a more cross-cutting topic.

Members also expressed interest in not only covering governance of tourism, but also on the possibility to include discussion of governance issues and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SF-MST.

The Editorial Board agreed to provide any further feedback on the comments and proposed solutions and share relevant material by May, 10th.

Item 4. Revised outline for Chapter 1 and a new Chapter 2

Mr. Carl Obst introduced the changes in the structure of Chapter 1 as well as the structure of the new Chapter 2. Chapter 1 (Introduction) will be shortened to focus on the sustainability of tourism and its measurement. Chapter 2 will cover the nature and scope of SF-MST, sub-national measurement as well as the indicators and other statistical outputs. The sub-national chapter will no longer exist as this topic will be introduced in chapter 2 and then embedded in each chapter of the sustainability dimensions (economic, social and environmental).

Group discussion:

The Editorial Board welcomed the proposed changes on chapter 1, the outline of the new chapter 2 and the redistribution of the sub-national measurement across the chapter 2 and thematic chapters (economic, social and environmental).

Item 5. Briefing of the New MST Research Groups

Ms. Clara van der Pol introduced the scope and membership of the MST Research Groups: “Allocation of environmental flows and indicators”, “Measurement of the social dimension of tourism’s sustainability”, and “Delineation of sub-national spatial areas”. She also mentioned that a research group focusing on tourism occupations will be created soon to evaluate to what extent this topic could be covered within SF-MST and draft relevant text. She called for suggestions of possible additional members for the occupations research team as well as additional statisticians specialized in social statistics who could support the further development of the social chapter.

Item 6. Next Steps

The Chair highlighted the key dates and next steps of the MST roadmap. With regards to key dates and activities of the MST Editorial Board, the Chair announced that an online meeting will take place on 31 May to discuss the new version of SF-MST (to be circulated on 25th May). Another meeting is planned for 28 June to approve the SF-MST version that will go to the global consultation. In September, the Editorial Board will have the opportunity to review the comments of the global consultation, ahead of the meeting of the Expert Group on MST (provisional dates between 19 and 21 September, TBC).

Item 7. Closing

The Chair recalled that additional feedback and material can be provided up to 10 May and warmly thanked the Editorial Board for its fruitful discussions and very active engagement.

List of participants

Austria	Mr. Peter Laimer Vice Director of the Directorate Spatial Statistics Statistics Austria
Canada	Mr. Michel Dubreuil Senior Manager Destination Canada
Philippines	Ms. Manette T. Reyes Officer-In-Charge Statistics Economic Analysis and Information Management Division Department of Tourism Ms. Rey Jean R. Almazan Tourism Operations Officer Department of Tourism

Saudi Arabia	<p>Mr. Faisal Abdullah Al Saleemi Senior Information Researcher Tourism Intelligence Center Ministry of Tourism</p> <p>Mr. Munthir AL ANSARI Senior Consultant Tourism Intelligence Center Ministry of Tourism</p>
Spain	<p>Mr. Julio López Astor Deputy General Director Subdirector General for Tourism Knowledge and Studies Tourism Institute of Spain (TURESPAÑA)</p>
Eurostat	<p>Mr. Arturo de la Fuente Head of Unit Environment statistics and accounts; sustainable development</p> <p>Mr. Christophe Demunter Team Leader - Tourism statistics European businesses Dir G – Business and trade statistics</p>
ILO	<p>Mr. Rafael Diez de Medina Chief Statistician</p>
UNWTO	<p>Ms. Clara van der Pol Acting Director, Statistics Department</p> <p>Mr. Carl Obst Expert</p>