

Third meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau
Geneva, 12-13 February 2008

Item 6 of the Provisional
Agenda

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON ELECTRONIC RAW DATA
REPORTING**

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

BACKGROUND

1. The Task Force on Electronic Raw Data Reporting (ERDR) was established after its terms of reference were approved by the Bureau in October 2005 (ECE/CES/BUR/2005/11).
2. The last report of this work was provided to the Bureau in February 2006 (ECE/CES/BUR/2006/16), at which time a work program and a list of proposed task force members was submitted to the Bureau. It was suggested that a website on good practices and national experiences in the field of EDR be developed.

PROGRESS SINCE FEBRUARY 2006

3. The Task Force organized a successful work session in Geneva on 6-8 June 2006 (see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2006.11.erdr.htm>). This workshop identified issues of concern, and collected experiences in the form of papers prepared by national statistical offices.
4. The Task Force with the assistance of the secretariat has developed a website of good practices in the area of ERDR (see <http://www.unece.org/stats/erdr/>). This website has not been released for public viewing, pending the review and approval process that should be completed by the February 2008 meeting of the Bureau. The Task Force considers the website ready for release.

**STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE WEBSITE ON GOOD PRACTICES IN
ERDR**

XBRL Experiences

5. XBRL stands for eXtensible Business Reporting Language. It is an open standard, free of licence fees, based on the XML. This web protocol is being developed and promoted by an international non-profit consortium of more than 480 major international companies, organizations and government agencies (See: www.xbrl.com).
6. Statistical offices use XBRL because it is the language already used by business. Within the statistical community, there are mixed views about its usefulness. Some countries have

invested in this direction, while others consider it to be little used in business. XBRL does not include certain statistical concepts such as hypercubes, time series and metadata.

7. The experience shows that there are statistical offices with an enthusiastic and optimistic view of XBRL, while in other countries there is scepticism since the XBRL was not designed expressly for statistical purposes. The articles presented on the website are all from the “optimistic” camp and some countries may wish to add papers with a counter view.

Metadata

8. Metadata is used to facilitate the understanding, use and management of data. This makes metadata important in the electronic data reporting for both respondents and recipients of the data. Metadata is right at the core of structuring electronic questionnaires and data transmission messages.

9. The content of this section comprises papers originating from the June 2006 workshop on ERDR, as well as from the Common Metadata Framework (CMF).

SDMX concepts and ERDR

10. The Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative focuses primarily on the exchange of aggregated statistics for the needs of international organizations. However, the generic models and concepts used within the SDMX may be of use to other applications, including the raw data collection and structuring of data and metadata for in-house statistical systems.

Census data collection

11. The population census is one of the major statistical collections that countries undertake. A small number of countries have started using electronic data collection in their most recent rounds of population censuses. The experiences of Canada, Australia and Spain are currently presented on the website.

e-Identity

12. Electronic data collection, whether from businesses or the population, requires proper authentication. Various approaches are used including electronic signatures, certificates or electronic identity card. The respondents to statistical surveys or censuses often request a stricter security than that of e-business.

Open Source Software

13. Open Source Software (OSS) has been a significant trend in IT applications over recent times. While there are many examples of OSS for private and general office use, there appear to be limited statistical OSS applications. One of the major constraints for statistical applications relates to the differing operating systems that are used by national statistical institutes. Statistical offices are generally willing to share their software developments with other national statistical institutes.

Useful Links

14. This section comprises links to other related resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORK

15. A proposed follow-up work session in November 2007 did not solicit a sufficient number of registrations and contributed papers. The Task Force concluded that the reason was the large number of events taking place. Therefore, the Task Force decided to hold electronic consultations on the structure and content of the website, and identified other existing groups that can continue the work:

- The Steering Group on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS);
- The Steering group on Statistical Metadata (METIS);
- The CoRD Group (Coordination of Raw Data) of Eurostat, that may allow participation of non-EU countries;

16. Therefore, it is recommended:

- (i) that the Bureau approves the public release of the ERDR website (www.unece.org/stats/erdr). The UNECE secretariat will be responsible for further updating the website as new knowledge in this area becomes available, in cooperation with the groups listed above;
- (ii) that the Bureau agrees to terminate the Task Force, on the understanding that a similar team of specialists can be activated in the future if deemed necessary.

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