

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMISSION OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**EUROSTAT**

**Joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session  
on Statistical Metadata**

(6 - 8 March 2002, Luxembourg)

Working Paper No. 22

English only

Topic (iii): Metadata and quality

## **HOW USEFUL ARE STATISTICAL METADATA IN ASSESSING DATA QUALITY?**

Submitted by OECD<sup>1</sup>

### **Invited paper**

#### **ABSTRACT**

That statistical metadata are needed to assess quality is a motherhood statement. International national organisations expend a great deal of effort in disseminating metadata to accompany the statistical data they produce. Such metadata are made available through a variety of media such as paper publications, electronic products and websites. They are usually compiled without reference to international metadata content standards, of which there are few. This paper assesses how much use these metadata are to users in obtaining an assessment of the quality of statistical data.

In the absence of any universally accepted definition of the term "quality", the paper utilises the seven elements of quality described by Eurostat, namely: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility and clarity, coherence, comparability and completeness. The paper draws extensively on OECD experience in the use of statistical metadata for a series of publications that compare the methodologies used by OECD Member countries in the compilation of short-term economic indicators.

The paper concludes with the authors' views on areas where international standards for metadata need to be developed to enhance the usefulness of metadata in assessing data quality. Groups such as METIS and Metanet could undertake such developments and promote use of the resulting standards by international and national organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Michael Colledge and Denis Ward.