**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

UNECE Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication
(Geneva, 13-15 May 2008)

FUTURE WORK ON STATISTICAL DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Submitted by UNECE1[1]

I. BACKGROUND

1.   The aim of UNECE work sessions is not only to provide a forum for networking and the exchange of experiences and ideas, but to also produce guidelines, publications or other resources on the topics discussed. In the past this group has produced two such products:

- Making Data Meaningful: a guide to writing stories about numbers (2005)
  http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/writing/
- Communicating with the Media: a guide for statistical organizations (2004)
  http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/media/guide/

2.   In 2008, the group will work on developing a new product following the work session held in May. In order to make a decision on which product will be most useful to statistical offices, the steering group prepared a short list of potential products, based on feedback from past meetings on dissemination and communication, and a survey of participants of the May meeting was conducted, asking them to rank these products according to their preferences. There was also the opportunity to suggest other products.
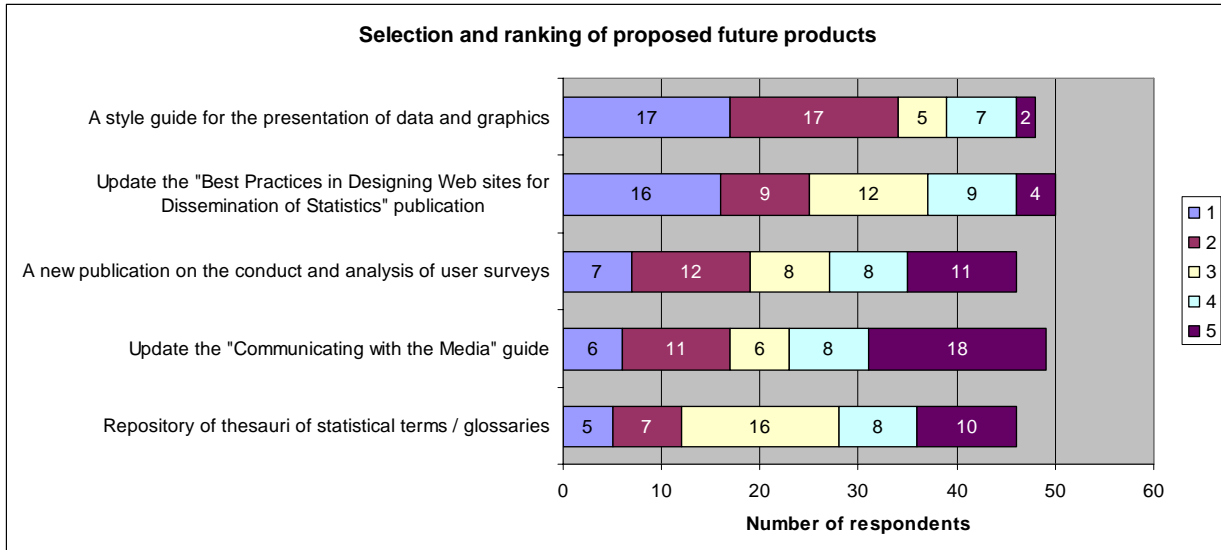
II. POTENTIAL PRODUCTS SHORT LIST

3.   The following five potential products were on the short list:

(i)   **Update the *Best Practices in Designing Web sites for Dissemination of Statistics*** (2001) (http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/websitebestpractice.pdf) with a focus on non-technical issues relating to web site communication. This may incorporate an on-line repository for sharing experiences and results of usability testing.

(ii)   **Update the *Communicating with the Media* guide** (2004) (http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/media/guide/) to take into account changes to the news cycle and the impact blogs and other web publishing tools have had on the media.

(iii)   A new study and publication to provide recommendations on the **conduct and analysis of user surveys** and other feedback mechanisms.

(iv)   A **style guide for the presentation of data and graphics** (numerous examples exist and could be used as a basis). This could be an annex to the *Making Data Meaningful* guide (http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/writing/) which already contains some brief tips about tables, graphs and maps.

(v)   **Repository of thesauri of statistical terms / glossaries** - it seems like many organizations are working on developing these, and sharing this information could be valuable.

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III. SURVEY RESULTS

4.   A total of 51 responses to the survey were received. As the graph below illustrates, the most preferred product was "A style guide for the presentation of data and graphics", with 34% of respondents ranking this first and 78% selecting in their top three preferences.

Selection and ranking of proposed future products

Product	1	2	3	4	5
A style guide for the presentation of data and graphics	17	17	5	7	2
Update the "Best Practices in Designing Web sites for Dissemination of Statistics" publication	16	9	12	9	4
A new publication on the conduct and analysis of user surveys	7	12	8	8	11
Update the "Communicating with the Media" guide	6	11	6	8	18
Repository of thesauri of statistical terms / glossaries	5	7	16	8	10

Number of respondents

5.   Based on the frequency each product was selected as either first or second preference, the survey resulted in the following ranking of the short listed products (from most to least preferred).

   i.   A style guide for the presentation of data and graphics

   ii.   Update the *Best Practices in Designing Web sites for Dissemination of Statistics* (2001)

   iii.   A new study and publication on the conduct and analysis of user surveys and other feedback mechanisms.

   iv.   Update the *Communicating with the Media* guide (2004)

   v.   Repository of thesauri of statistical terms / glossaries

6.   The following comments or suggestions for other products were received:
   - Publish best practices in
     - analytical notes writing.
     - developing interactive graphs
     - dissemination of microdata
     - how to maintain consistent meta? My idea is that is impossible to maintain consistent meta for all meta for all tables; but which part is doable?
   - Develop new guides/recommendations on
     - communication about the quality of (official) statistics.
     - how to maintain quality for tables, prevent inconsistencies, errors, and incomprehensible text? This in the areas: processes & roles, organisation & resources, suporting tools and materials and management support.
     - engaging with social media
     - moving from print to electronic publishing
     - Internal two-way communication - for better statistical presentation of phenomena". This would involves issues like relationships between statisticians and PR or communication department, between statisticians responsible for different subject-

matter statistics, communication among employees and relationship of top management with statisticians – all with the goal achieving better understanding of statistical output by various users.

- Educational products (student corner, etc..)
- how to create tools (publications, web pages) to sensitize students (pupil) for statistics. Some organizations have already developed pedagogic tools. It would be interesting to learn from their experiences. Often these tools are only available in national language.

- Develop Russian-English and vice versa statistical terms glossary or dictionary
- Create a repository as a starting point for launching Dissemination and Communication Wiki into which for a start existing terms could be loaded from various sources. Once this is done, the project would evolve in the usual wiki style[2].
- We doubt the usefulness of updating existing guides. In case of interest, need to discuss who are the target groups
- Sharing of software for dissemination[3]

IV. NEXT STEPS

7.   On the morning of **Saturday 17 May from 9:30am -12 noon**, some of the steering group members and work session participants will meet in Geneva (Office C.456) to start work on a style guide for the presentation of data and graphics. The **proposed agenda for this meeting** is:

(i)   Agree on the scope, objective and audience for the style guide
(ii)   Existing examples and resources
(iii)   Content
    a.   Brainstorm possible content
    b.   Group into chapters / sections
(iv)   Allocation of tasks, agree on working methods and deadlines

8.   Anyone who wishes to join this meeting, or contribute to work on the product during 2008, is welcome. Please notify jessica.gardner@unece.org of your interest.

9.   The style guide should been finalized before the end of 2008 and will be published in electronic form, and possibly also in print, by the UNECE. A copy will be sent to all participants of the Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication and it will also be available through the UNECE web site. Priorities for future work beyond this product will be discussed during the May 2008 work session and documented in the final report of that meeting.

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[2] See www.unece.org/stats/metis/wiki for an example of awiki created and maintained by the UNECE for another project (Statistical Metadata). The functionalities of METIS-wiki will be expanded in the coming months and made available to other projects coordinated by the UNECE Statistical Division later in 2008.
[3] Note by the UNECE: •   A Task Force was created under the auspices of the UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Steering Group on Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS) aiming at identifying the scope and models for sharing statistical software between statistical offices. The Task Force comprises representatives from the following countries and organizations: Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, Eurostat, UNIDO and UNECE. Mr. Marton Vucsan (Netherlands, mvcn@cbs.nl) is the Coordinator of the Task Force. The UNECE serves as the Secretariat of the Task Force (steven.vale@unece.org).