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**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION
STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**

**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE**

Joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS)
(Geneva, 17-19 May 2004)

Topic (v): Review and follow-up to the activities of the Conference of European Statisticians

**REVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN
STATISTICIANS IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION PROCESSING**

Note by the UNECE secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Following the tradition of the former UNECE Working Party on Electronic Data Processing (CES/WP.9), the framework for international cooperation in the field of management of statistical information systems in the UNECE region was agreed upon, and later approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The approved terms of reference include periodic reviews of CES activities concerning statistical information processing, statistical metadata, statistical data editing, geographical information systems, statistical confidentiality and electronic data reporting. At the MSIS 2003 meeting, it was agreed to focus the 2004 review on the issue of statistical metadata.

II. STATISTICAL METADATA (METIS)

A. Background

2. As statistical metadata represent the key to the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics, this is a traditional activity of the Conference. Presently, it is undertaken in cooperation with Eurostat and OECD. The origins of this activity are within the UNECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Programme. The two phases of the programme were undertaken in the 1980s.

3. The organizing committee is chaired by Mr. Daniel Gillman (United States, Bureau of Labour Statistics). International organizations involved are represented by Mr. Juraj Riecan (UNECE), Mr. Marco Pellegrino (Eurostat) and Mr. Denis Ward (OECD).

B. Recent developments

4. The last joint Work Session on Statistical Metadata (METIS) was held in Geneva 9-11 February 2004 and the following substantive topics were discussed: (i) functions of metadata in statistical production; (ii) metadata interchange; (iii) metadata models and terminology and (iv) using metadata for searching and

finding statistical data in websites and portals. While the issue of metadata models and terminology had officially its own topic on the agenda, it appeared in the discussion throughout the whole work session. The participants recognized that several models were created to serve different purposes (e.g. SDMX model, ISO/IEC 11179, UNECE recommendations on modelling data and metadata, etc.), and that each of these models has created its own environment of concepts, definitions and terminology. These are metadata models/frameworks that exist and are recognized internationally, but it was also reported that several substantially different metadata systems coexist within national statistical systems. Therefore, suggestions were made, at the work session, that further harmonization and convergence of the framework would be in the interest of national statistical offices.

C. Proposal for future work

5. The short-term objective, with the first concrete output expected within the next 18-24 months, would be a draft framework providing links to previous and current international metadata standards initiatives together with comparisons of selected examples of current practices at national and international levels. This framework and links to recommended practices would be published. Such a framework could be organized along a number of key themes such as:

- processes for metadata collection;
- terminology;
- metadata and data interchange entailing identification of common models between international organizations to which national agencies could map;
- migration strategy from existing fragmented metadata environments;
- metadata dissemination and its relation to dissemination of statistics;
- metadata governance and corporate management issues;
- incorporation of usability concerns in metadata management.

6. There was a common understanding that it would be too ambitious to cover all themes in the first drafts, and a Task Force should be set up to coordinate this work. The membership would consist of interested experts from national statistical offices, and representatives of UNECE, Eurostat and OECD. The UNECE secretariat would provide professional and logistics support for the Task Force.

7. To cover a larger professional community within official statistics, the draft(s) emanating from the work of the Task Force would be discussed at work sessions on METIS, before being submitted to the Bureau and the Conference for endorsement. The Task Force would also consult with other experts on metadata via electronic communications.

8. The report of the February 2004 Work Session on METIS is attached as CES/AC.71/2004/22/Add.1 (in English only).

D. Points for discussion

9. The MSIS participants may wish to consider the following points:

- (i) Feasibility of the METIS project and prioritization of key themes;
- (ii) Interest of statistical offices for active participation;
- (iii) Relationship to other on-going international initiatives and activities.

III. OTHER CES ACTIVITIES

A. Statistical data editing

10. The last UNECE Work session on Statistical Metadata held 20-22 October 2003 in Madrid launched the work on the publication devoted to the impact of editing and imputation on data quality. The editorial board led by Mr. John Kovar (Statistics Canada), began its work through electronic communications. In

addition to the publication, the work session recommended to discuss the following topics at a future work session: (i) editing administrative data and combined data sources – surveys, censuses; (ii) implementing editing strategies and links to other parts of processing; (iii) electronic data reporting (EDR) – editing nearer source and multimode collections; and. (iv) new and emerging methods, including automation through machine learning, imputation, evaluation of methods. Statistics Canada has offered to host the next meeting to be held in the first half of 2005 in Ottawa (Canada).

11. The report of the October 2003 work session on statistical data editing is attached as CES/AC.71/2004/22/Add.2 (in English only).

B. Statistical data confidentiality

12. The joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Statistical Data Confidentiality. The proceedings of the Work Session are about to be published by Eurostat. The Work Session recommended a list of topics for further study (see document CES/2003/26).

C. Electronic data reporting

13. UNECE and Eurostat have tentatively planned to organize a meeting on electronic data reporting in the second half of 2004. The following topics were recommended for discussion: (i) national integration (e-government initiatives); (ii) national research (quality issue, organization, administrative sources); (iii) respondents' behaviour (security, e-commerce, built-in edits, benchmarking of data); (iv) communication and support (helpdesk, training); and (v) implementation (in parallel with the programme of work of the work session).

14. The report of the February 2002 Work Session is available in document CES/2002/28.

D. Geographical information systems (GIS)

15. The CES Bureau, at its October 2003 meeting in Washington, approved the proposal to withdraw UNECE's involvement after the 2004 meeting on GIS. However, preparations for the meeting tentatively scheduled for June 2003 are behind the schedule, and the meeting may need to be postponed or cancelled.

16. The following topics were expected to be discussed at the June 2004 joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on GIS: (i) infrastructure requirements for geo-statistics; (ii) cooperation between national statistical institutes and geo-data providers; (iii) solutions for supporting user needs; and (iv) data pre-processing - the foundation for geo-statistics.

E. Survey on e-Government in statistics

17. At the time of the report, the members of the Steering Group were discussing a proposed questionnaire on e-Government and testing it within their organizations. The MSIS participants will be briefed about this activity.

F. Points for discussion

18. The MSIS participants may wish to discuss the following points:

- (i) Feasibility and possible action plan for the survey on e-Government in statistics;
- (ii) Relevance of activities on statistical data editing, statistical data reporting and statistical confidentiality to priorities of national statistical offices;
- (iii) Streamlining the activities pattern, including discontinuation of UNECE's involvement in GIS.

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