OUTLINE OF THE DISCUSSION ON STATISTICAL METADATA FOR THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

BACKGROUND

1.   The Bureau agreed, at its October 2007 meeting in Helsinki, to include an item on statistical metadata on the agenda of the June 2008 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians. It should be a short discussion within the formal business. This outline is prepared on the assumption that the time allocated to metadata will be, taking into account other items of the formal business, approximately 20 minutes.

PROPOSED OUTLINE OF THE PAPER/PRESENTATION

2.   The message communicated to the plenary session audience, representing the top management of national statistical offices, should be that metadata has a fundamental importance in the management of statistical projects; and properly organised metadata will help the statistical office to be much more effective. Therefore, investment in metadata should come from the top management. Case studies and examples of implementation should be highlighted in the background paper.

3.   The following structure and content is suggested for the background paper.

Corporate value proposition
*   Define role and functions of the statistical metadata system (SMS) for the national statistical office.
*   Describe major users of statistical metadata.
*   Identify the benefits a SMS provides each of them.

Strategies and policy framework
*   Preparation of a corporate SMS vision.
*   Present potential objects for describing metadata.
*   Formulate recommendations for the preparation of an SMS strategic plan.
*   Particular attention is drawn to the SMS corporate management strategy.

Core principles for metadata management
*   Express the most important principles and recommendations for managing metadata. The aim of these principles is to facilitate design, implementation, maintenance and use of a corporate metadata repository (CMR) in a SMS.

Corporate governance models for metadata management
- Present lessons for a good corporate governance of a SMS, taken from the experiences of NSOs.
- Explain potential risks and challenges in management.
- Consider related human resource and organizational problems.

Case studies

Case studies by countries that volunteered to prepare them shall be presented according to the following template:
- Introductions, strategy, current situation;
- Statistical metadata systems and the statistical cycle;
- Statistical metadata in each phase of the statistical cycle;
- System and design issues;
- Organizational and workplace culture issues;
- Lessons learned;
- Attachments and links.

Implementation
- Experiences of national statistical offices that have recently implemented or re-engineered their statistical information systems.

PREPARATION OF THE PAPER

4.   It is recommended that the background paper be prepared on the basis of parts A (corporate context), C (statistical cycle – case studies) and D (implementation) of the Common Metadata Framework (CMF). It is also recommended that the paper be edited by the secretariat under the guidance of the Steering Group on Statistical Metadata (METIS).

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