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| ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE | 30 October 2007 |

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Item 4c of the Provisional Agenda

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE
STEERING GROUP ON STATISTICAL METADATA (METIS[1])

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

BACKGROUND

1.   The Bureau considered, in February 2007, a progress report of the work on statistical metadata, and particularly the progress achieved on the first release of the Common Metadata Framework[2] (CMF). This work was steered by a Task Force established in 2004[3]. (Information on further progress in developing the CMF after the February 2007 Bureau meeting is provided in Annex.)

2.   The aim of the CMF is to provide guidance to national statistical offices in choosing the right standards, models and approaches in developing their metadata systems. It is a living repository of knowledge and good practices related to statistical metadata. It requires continuous maintenance and improvement so that is relevant to the needs of national statistical offices.

3.   The Bureau decided to create a Steering Group on Statistical Metadata (METIS) and asked the secretariat to prepare draft Terms of Reference.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STEERING GROUP

4.   The focus of the work is on identifying good practices and offering guidance to experts from national statistical offices to existing metadata related standards, in harmony with other initiatives such as SDMX. The objectives of the Steering Group are to:
- Promote the implementation of metadata systems by developing advocacy targeting the senior management level and subject-matter staff of national statistical offices;
- Oversee the maintenance of the Common Metadata Framework (CMF) directing it towards a practical guide serving national statistical offices in developing their corporate metadata systems;

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[1] METIS is an old abbreviation from the times of the Statistical Computing Project. It signifies "METaInformation Systems". In the course of years it has become a sort of a trademark for the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD activities on statistical metadata.

[2] The Common Metadata Framework is available at: http://www.unece.org/stats/cmf/Welcome.html

[3] The Terms of Reference of the former Task Force are provided in document CES/BUR.2004/44.

- Facilitate collection, discussion and dissemination of best practices in the field of statistical metadata focusing on the role of metadata in the corporate management of statistical activities and practical implementations.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

5.   The main output of the work is the Common Metadata Framework (CMF) located on the UNECE website. The CMF is structured in four parts. The members of the Steering Group on METIS assume their responsibility for soliciting new contributions, seeking reviews and comments, and maintaining the publications, as follows:

Part A, Corporate Context: this part provides an executive overview of the framework. The future activities should be oriented toward advocacy. The target audience is senior managers in national statistical offices.
> Expected outputs for Part A:
> - It is recommended to issue Part A in a print form, in order to serve as a support material for advocacy reasons.
> - The key points from the Part A will be presented at the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians.
>
> Editors of Part A:
>> Alistair Hamilton (Australia)
>> Bo Sundgren (Sweden)
>> Jana Meliskova (Expert invited by the UNECE)

Part B, Metadata Concepts, Standards, Models and Registries: this part is intended as a guide through numerous metadata-related standards, such as SDMX, SDDS, GDDS, ISO 11179, CMR, DDI, XBRL, etc. The role of Part B is to explain how the particular standards should be used, as well as to demonstrate synergies between the standards (e.g. correspondence between registries under SDMX and ISO 11179, etc.). The terminology is represented by the SDMX Common Metadata Vocabulary (MCV). MCV will be reviewed and extended as a component of the Common Metadata Framework from the general viewpoint of official statistics.
> Expected outputs for Part B:
> - The Part B will be developed to comprise a complete list of applicable standards with the indication of the scope of individual standards
> - The Steering Group will continue to collect studies on transformation of formats between different standards.
>
> Editors of Part B:
>> Daniel Gillman (United States)
>> Alice Born (Canada)
>> Marco Pellegrino (Eurostat)
>> Denis Ward (OECD)

Part C, Metadata and the Statistical Cycle: the role of this part is to achieve a harmonised understanding of the statistical survey live-cycle through looking for common points in different presently used models.

      Expected outputs for Part C:

- This part also comprises a collection of national case studies on metadata use within the statistical cycle. These case studies also serve as a feeder to parts B (standards and models) and D (implementation).
- A compendium of lessons learned from the case studies will be developed and presented at the plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians.

      Editors of Part C:

            Gary Dunnet (New Zealand)

            Joza Klep (Slovenia)

Part D, Implementation: this part fulfils a traditional role of METIS in sharing experiences and highlighting good practices. In addition to already collected examples of successful implementation of metadata systems, the case studies collected through Part C will be used to identify possible further contributions.

      Expected outputs for Part D:

- Part D will consist of practical examples of implemented, by national statistical offices, metadata systems highlighting lessons learned that may be useful for other countries.
- The implementation examples shall be also demonstrated from the viewpoint of management and subject matter statisticians.

      Editors of Part D:

            Max Booleman (Netherlands)

6. The maintenance of the CMF shall be guided by the following principles:
   - the framework shall be a living/evolving reference to standards, concepts, and best practices. The Steering group should ensure future maintenance of the framework;
   - the framework should be published in an electronic form on the UNECE website, with some parts published in print (after the public and Steering Group review);
   - the framework shall comprise two types of information:
     o case studies for the framework itself;
     o selected and edited contributions by countries (good practices);
   - it is important to add a general introduction, and provide "packaging" to link individual parts of the framework;
   - in order to attract broader readership, each item of the framework should comprise a general overview, avoiding overly detailed technical information, with links to more technical and detailed papers;
   - linked contributions may relate to multiple parts of the framework;
   - all material included in the framework should be accessible without restriction;
   - drafts will be made available for public review. After two rounds of review they will be left stable within the framework for some (reasonable) time;
   - the draft framework shall be updated using contributions from METIS work sessions;
   - the Steering group should be open to all inputs within and outside the framework

of METIS and ensure collaboration with other relevant groups.

METHODS OF WORK

5.   The main methods of work of the Steering Group on Statistical Metadata (METIS) are:
- electronic consultations (audio and videoconferences and e-mail) used for a regular review of the content and its potential amendments;
- meetings (work sessions) on Statistical Metadata (METIS) where all national and international statistical offices and interested international organizations can participate. These work sessions permit the exchange of experiences, collection of new contributions to the CMF, public review of the CMF's content and renewal of the Steering Group's membership. The work sessions are usually organized at 18-24 months intervals.

MEMBERSHIP

7.   The intergovernmental work on Statistical Metadata (METIS) is a joint undertaking of the UNECE, Eurostat and OECD. Representatives of the interested National Statistical Offices and the three sponsoring international organizations will be members of the Steering Group. The current members are: Graeme Oakley (Australia), Alice Born (Canada), Gary Dunnet (New Zealand), Max Booleman (Netherlands), Joza Klep (Slovenia), Bo Sundgren (Sweden), Daniel Gillman (United States), Juraj Riecan (UNECE), Marco Pellegrino (Eurostat), Denis Ward (OECD), Jana Meliskova (Expert invited by the UNECE).

TIME FRAME

8.   The Steering Group shall review every year the content of each part of the CMF. Parts B, C and D of the CMF, that are still in a draft form should be finalised by the end of 2009, when the content of the CMF and the mandate of the Steering Group should be subject to a review by the Bureau.

ANNEX

FURTHER PROGRESS ON THE COMMON METADATA FRAMEWORK AFTER THE FEBRUARY 2007 BUREAU MEETING

7.   At the invitation of Statistics Austria, a workshop was organized in Vienna on 4-6 July 2007. The workshop focused on pushing forward the work on Part C of the CMF which was, at that time, the least progressed part of the CMF. The workshop participants identified important issues that should be further discussed by the Steering Group and the 9-11 April 2008 Work Session on Statistical metadata (METIS, Luxembourg, 9-11 April 2008).

1.   The definition of a survey was discussed, as there were diverse interpretations of this basic term. It was proposed to adopt a definition that would combine the original MCV definition (coming from the UNECE publication) with the Statistics Canada definition:
> "An investigation about the characteristics of a given population by means of collecting data from a sample of that population and estimating their characteristics through the systematic use of statistical methodology. Included are primary sources, such as censuses and sample surveys, and other sources, such as the collection of data from administrative records. Derived statistical activities are also included."

This proposal was adopted by the participants at the workshop and shall be further reviewed as outlined in the preceding paragraph.

2.   There are several classifications for types of metadata (metadata groups, typologies). The workshop participants proposed the following types for further consideration:
- Survey Metadata;
- Definitional Metadata;
- Methodological Metadata;
- System Metadata;
- Operational Metadata;
- Quality metadata.

3.   There was an in-depth discussion aiming at finding an agreement on a generic model of a statistical life cycle. Any generic model shall be considered only as a general schema that may not be fully applicable to all cases. The following was proposed:
- specifying the needs;
- survey planning and design;
- survey preparation, building the IT systems;
- data collection;
- input processing, derivation, estimation, aggregation;
- analysis;
- dissemination;
- archiving;
- post survey evaluation.

4.   There are many possibilities regarding the naming of the cycle. The feedback received

through an anonymous questionnaire showed that 19 participants agreed with **"Statistical survey life cycle"** and one participant had qualifying comments showing only minor differences shortening the name. This title will be used in Part C of the CMF to cover the nine processing phases spelled out above.

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