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Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference:
Classification of Statistical Activities

Results of the consultation on the *Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA) 2.0 and explanatory notes*

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

This document summarizes the comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA) 2.0 and explanatory notes* (ECE/CES/2022/8). The UNECE Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the CSA 2.0 in April-May 2022.

Forty-eight replies to the consultation were received from the CES members. The large majority supported the endorsement of the classification and gave positive feedback, while providing detailed comments to clarify some statistical areas and improve the explanatory notes. However, some respondents had some concerns. The CES strives for reaching a consensus on the materials that are presented for endorsement. Therefore, the Task Team considered important to address the concerns raised, and further improve the Classification so that it could be universally accepted.

Since it is planned that the CSA 2.0 would become a global classification and be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission, UNSD conducted a global consultation on the CSA 2.0 in parallel to gather additional feedback and further advance the process. Thirty-five responses were received through this consultation. The feedback from the global consultation was also positive but some concerns were raised as well.

This document summarizes the comments and suggestions for amendments received, and outlines the further work that the Task Team plans to undertake to finalise the updated version of the Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA 2.0).

The 2022 Conference of European Statisticians is invited to take note of the feedback received through the electronic consultation, and request the Task Team to continue work towards an internationally agreed global classification as outlined in this document.

I. Introduction

1. This document summarizes comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA) 2.0 and explanatory notes.*

2. The CSA 2.0 was developed by the UNECE Task Team on updating the Classification of Statistical Activities, established in February 2020. Members of the Task team are Canada, Ireland, Mexico (Chair), New Zealand, Eurostat, UNSD and UNECE. The CES Bureau reviewed the draft CSA 2.0 and explanatory notes in February 2022 and requested the UNECE Secretariat to send them to all CES members for consultation. The UNECE Secretariat conducted a consultation in April–May 2022.

3. Forty-eight replies were received to the consultation from the following countries and international organizations: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics and Census Bureau), Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

4. The CES Bureau supported the CSA 2.0 becoming a global classification. Therefore, UNSD conducted in parallel a global consultation to gather additional feedback and further advance the process. Thirty-five responses were received through this consultation, from the following countries: Aruba, Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cuba, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Laos, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Palestine, Panama, Qatar, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and the Pacific Community.

5. The current note focuses on the responses from the countries and organizations participating in the work of CES but reflects also the feedback from other countries. The comments and the Task Force's responses are summarized in sections II-IV. Section V the proposed next steps, and Section VI a proposal to the Conference.

II. General comments

6. Many responding countries and organizations expressed their support for the work of the Task Team, welcoming the evolution of the classification. For example:

(a) **Costa Rica**: "The Classification is very useful; it can be used to order the topics on the institutional website or the statistical offer of the National Statistical System";

(b) **Cuba**: "It is an excellent tool for the classification of indicators and statistical activities in general."

(c) **Finland**: "Overall it is likely to be a useful tool."

(d) **Lithuania**: "The classification is comprehensive and can serve as a good guideline in several situations."

(e) **Namibia**: "This is a good initiative that will help countries in coordination of statistical activities.".

(f) **Poland**: "This version of the Classification seems to be refined, adequate to the conditions observed in recent years […] the CSA 2.0 takes into account all statistical activities carried out by various institutions included in national and international official statistics systems."

(g)   **Sweden**: "Since the classification covers a wide scope of important aspects, it creates better opportunities to make comprehensive international comparisons and thereby create better conditions for harmonization work between different countries."

(h)   **Türkiye**: "[The] new CSA is well designed..."

7.   To the question about agreeing to endorse the CSA 2.0, a clear majority (78%) of the countries and organizations responding to the CES consultation gave a positive answer. However, some respondents had concerns. These were mainly related to general issues, such as the type of the classification ('analytical classification'), treatment of the residual content, links with other statistical classifications and models, and uses of the CSA.

8.   Many countries, including those who agreed to endorse the CSA 2.0 gave suggestions for improving the Classification, e.g., moving some statistical areas to a different domain, clarifying the distinction between statistical areas, and improving the explanatory notes. These comments are explained more in detail in the section IV.

9.   Overall, there was general support for CSA 2.0 to become a global classification (91%). The comments of countries who responded negatively to this question showed that they were not opposing making the CSA a global classification in principle but they considered that the current version of the CSA required some more work. It was found desirable to have more time to consider the Classification, and involve countries from other regions in finalising the Classification before it is submitted to the UN Statistical Commission.

Response by the Task Team

10.   The CES strives for reaching a consensus on the materials that are presented for its endorsement. Although the majority of countries and organizations supported endorsement of CSA 2.0, the Task Team considers important to address the concerns raised in the electronic consultation, and further improve the Classification so that it could be universally accepted. The Task Team is ready to continue work on the CSA 2.0 to address the comments and concerns of countries and organizations.

11.   When the Task Team started its work, it debated heavily on many of the general issues that were raised by some countries in the electronic consultation, such as mutual exclusiveness, links to other existing standards, models and classifications, purposes of the CSA, etc. Through the discussions, the Task Team consolidated views and came to a consensus that is now reflected in the CSA 2.0. The Task team will review the comments in detail to identify how to best address them. There may also be a need to better explain the reasoning behind the approach taken by the Task Team. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' section may be developed to provide explanations to the basic questions that can arise.

12.   It should be pointed out that the aim of CSA is not to prescribe an organizational structure of a statistical office or statistical production process, or data dissemination. The Classification can be used as a reference leading to better harmonisation in structuring information about activities of statistical organizations, dissemination websites, publications, etc. Countries and organizations are welcome to adjust the Classification to their purposes and context.

III. Use of the Classification

13.   Twenty-two countries from the CES members are using the previous version of the CSA, often in an adapted form or as a basis for developing their own classification. Further twenty-four countries from the global consultation replied 'yes' to the question about the use of the CSA but in many cases, this concerned more the plans to use it in the future. In addition, fourteen international organizations are using the classification, as the Task Team learned through its research on the use of the previous version of the Classification among international organizations. This shows the need for such a classification.

14.   A number of countries have used the CSA 1.0 as a basis for statistical programme or other statistical planning instruments specifying which statistics is to be produced in the

country (**Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, North Macedonia** and **Ukraine**). In **Albania** the classification is included in their Law of Official Statistics. The CSA is used also as a coordination tool in the national statistical system to structure information about what statistics are produced by which agencies (**Albania, Colombia, Dominican Republic** and **North Macedonia**).

15. Some countries are using CSA for organising statistical reference materials needed for their work, such as statistical standards (**Canada**); papers and output of research (**Italy**); classifications, document management database (**New Zealand**); list of surveys, catalogue of publications (**Slovakia**). **Eurostat** is using it for the structure of statistical domains in the Statistical Requirements Compendium.

16. CSA is used also for structuring the statistical dissemination, including on the web (**Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, Slovakia** and **Ukraine**).

17. Several countries pointed out the important link with the SDMX domain structure that is based on CSA 1.0. Once the new version of CSA is adopted, it will be important to reflect this change also in SDMX.

Response by the Task Team

18. The widespread use and plans to use the CSA in the future makes it even more important to have a version that can be used across the globe. There were requests for more clarity of how and for what purposes the Classification can be used. This will be better explained in an introductory text or the explanatory notes to the CSA 2.0.

IV. Comments related to specific domains

19. The more detailed comments concerned moving some statistical areas to a different domain, making the statistical area titles more precise, adding some areas, and clarifying possible overlaps.

20. For all domains, there were suggestions on improving the explanatory notes to the statistical areas. These comments are very useful for making the explanatory notes clearer and more comprehensive.

21. In the <u>Domain 1 'Demographic and social statistics'</u>, the inclusion of 'Migration' as a separate statistical area was welcomed.

22. There were proposals to add additional statistical areas into this domain, such as sports and recreation, fertility, ethnicity and drugs. There were also some comments concerning 'income and consumption', and whether this statistical area would belong better to Doman 2 'Economic statistics' or to Domain 5 'Cross-cutting statistics'.

23. Some countries and organizations found that crime and justice statistics should be in Domain 1 and not under a separate Domain 4 on governance (**Belarus, Italy, UNODC**, see also paras 29-30).

24. The new structure of <u>Domain 2 'Economic Statistics'</u> was considered to give better visibility to the economic topics (**Brazil**).

25. Several comments on this Domain asked for clarifying better what belongs under the different statistical areas to avoid overlap, in particular concerning statistical areas 2.1.4 'Financial statistics', 2.1.1 'Financial accounts' and 2.8 'Banking, insurance and financial statistics' (**Belarus, Bulgaria**).

26. The System of Environmental-economic Accounts could belong to either Domain 2 'Economic statistics' or to Domain 3 'Environment statistics'. Its current placement in Domain 2 was preferred because of its important links with national accounts (**Brazil**).

27. There was general agreement with making <u>Domain 3 'Environment statistics'</u> a domain on its own (instead of being part of multi-domain statistics, as in the previous version of CSA). Basing the domain's structure on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) was welcome (**Brazil, New Zealand, Türkiye**).

28.   A question was raised whether 'climate change' should be included in Domain 3 rather than in Domain 5 'Cross-cutting statistics' (**Italy, UNCTAD**). It was noted that Biodiversity should be made more visible (**OECD, UNSD**).

29.   The <u>Domain 4 'Governance statistics'</u> was the one that received the most polarised reactions. A number of countries welcomed creating a separate domain for governance statistics and basing it on the Praia Group Handbook as it makes these statistical activities more visible (**Brazil, Mexico, Türkiye**).

30.   Other countries supported keeping 'Justice and crime statistics' under Domain 1 as it is a social phenomenon of interaction between people (**Belarus**). **UNODC** found that governance as a dedicated domain should cover only systemic and cross-cutting issues referring to general functioning of an organisation (or government). The topics on access and quality of justice, absence of corruption, safety and security should be under statistical area 'Crime and justice' in Domain 1 'Demographic and social statistics'.

31.   The change of title of <u>Domain 5</u> from 'Multi-domain' to '<u>Cross-cutting statistics</u>' was supported as it reflects better the contents of this domain (**Brazil**).

32.   'Circular economy' was considered better placed in Domain 2 'Economic statistics' by some countries (**Bulgaria**) and better placed in Domain 5 by others (**Colombia**).

33.   It was proposed to split the area 'Gender and special population groups' into two parts as women make up half of the population and cannot be considered a special population group (**Lithuania**).

34.   The <u>Domain 6 'Statistical infrastructure and methodology'</u> was considered important as it covers fundamental topics and is well structured (**Brazil**). **Türkiye** supported its current structure.

35.   There were suggestions to add items in this Domain, such as methodological research (**Italy**), paradata (**Hungary**). There were also suggestions to better clarify the titles of statistical areas, and what is considered as part of statistical infrastructure (**Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Hungary, UNSD**).

36.   Several suggestions concerned geospatial data. It was recommended to elevate it to a higher level as it goes beyond being just a type of source data (**Finland**). It was also recommended to review this against the current international geo-spatial classifications (**UK**).

37.   There were comments on the statistical area 'Data science' and suggestions to rename it to 'New data sources' (**UNCTAD**) or 'Other privately held data sources and non-traditional data sources' (**UNSD**).

38.   The <u>Domain 7 'Strategic and managerial issues'</u> was considered covering fundamental topics and being well structured (**Brazil**).

39.   It was suggested to include 'Data stewardship' in this domain (**Ireland**). **UNSD** suggested to review it in light of the *Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems*.

Response by the Task Team

40.   The Task Force will discuss the comments and suggestions in more detail to take them into account as much as possible while maintaining a clear structure and consistency of the Classification. In introducing the changes, the Task Force will try not to divert too much from the currently proposed structure that was supported by a majority of countries.

41.   The Task Force will carefully analyse all suggestions to improve the explanatory texts and take them on board as much as possible.

V. Next steps

42.   The CSA started as a regional classification for a specific purpose (the UNECE Database of International Statistical Activities). Over time, its use has considerably widened.

The electronic consultation showed that forty-six countries from different regions are using the CSA (or are planning to use it). Many of the fourteen international organizations who are also using the CSA have a global coverage. There was general support among responding countries and organizations that CSA would become a global classification.

43.   It is recommended that the CSA would become a member of the International Family of Statistical Classifications and be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission through the UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications (UN CEISC). The best practices for developing statistical classifications and criteria for the international statistical classifications[1] should be carefully considered in the next steps, and the alignment with these principles better explained.

44.   Consequently, the custodianship of the CSA would be transferred to UNSD from UNECE who provides the secretariat of the CES Bureau, the current custodian of the Classification.

45.   The Task Team would work further on the CSA 2.0 to take into account the comments from the electronic consultation as much as possible, without diverting too much from the current proposal that was supported by a majority of countries. To have a better representation of different regions, the Task Team may invite some more countries to become members, and consult with those countries and organizations who had substantive proposals for changes in the Classification. The Secretariat for this work would be jointly provided by UNECE and UNSD, until the proposal is submitted to the UN Statistical Commission (planned in 2023).

VI. Proposal to the Conference

46.   In view of the general support and many comments for improving the Classification, it is proposed that the Task Team continues its work to take into account the comments, and develops a version of the CSA 2.0 that can be submitted for adoption to the UN Statistical Commission.

47.   The Conference of European Statisticians is invited to agree on the way forward as proposed in Section V of the document.

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[1] See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices