

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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Topic (ii): Metadata modelling and terminology issues

CLASET – THE EDI STANDARD FOR CLASSIFICATIONS

Submitted by Eurostat¹

Contributed paper

I. THE ORIGIN OF CLASET

1. The design of CLASET is a Eurostat initiative. The mission of Eurostat - the "Statistical Office of the European Communities" - is to provide the European Union with a high-quality statistical information service. This requires the rapid collection of high quality raw data, an automated transmission of data and meta-data between Member States and Eurostat, and the timely dissemination of relevant, harmonised statistics.

2. Eurostat uses uniform rules to collect all statistical data from the National Statistical Institutes of each of the 15 Member States of the European Union. In order to develop standardisation and harmonisation of messages, the EDI Expert Group 6 (EEG6) of the European Board for EDI Standardisation (EBES) was launched in the offices of Eurostat on 10 November 1989. Eurostat's involvement in international standardisation is illustrated in the diagram overleaf

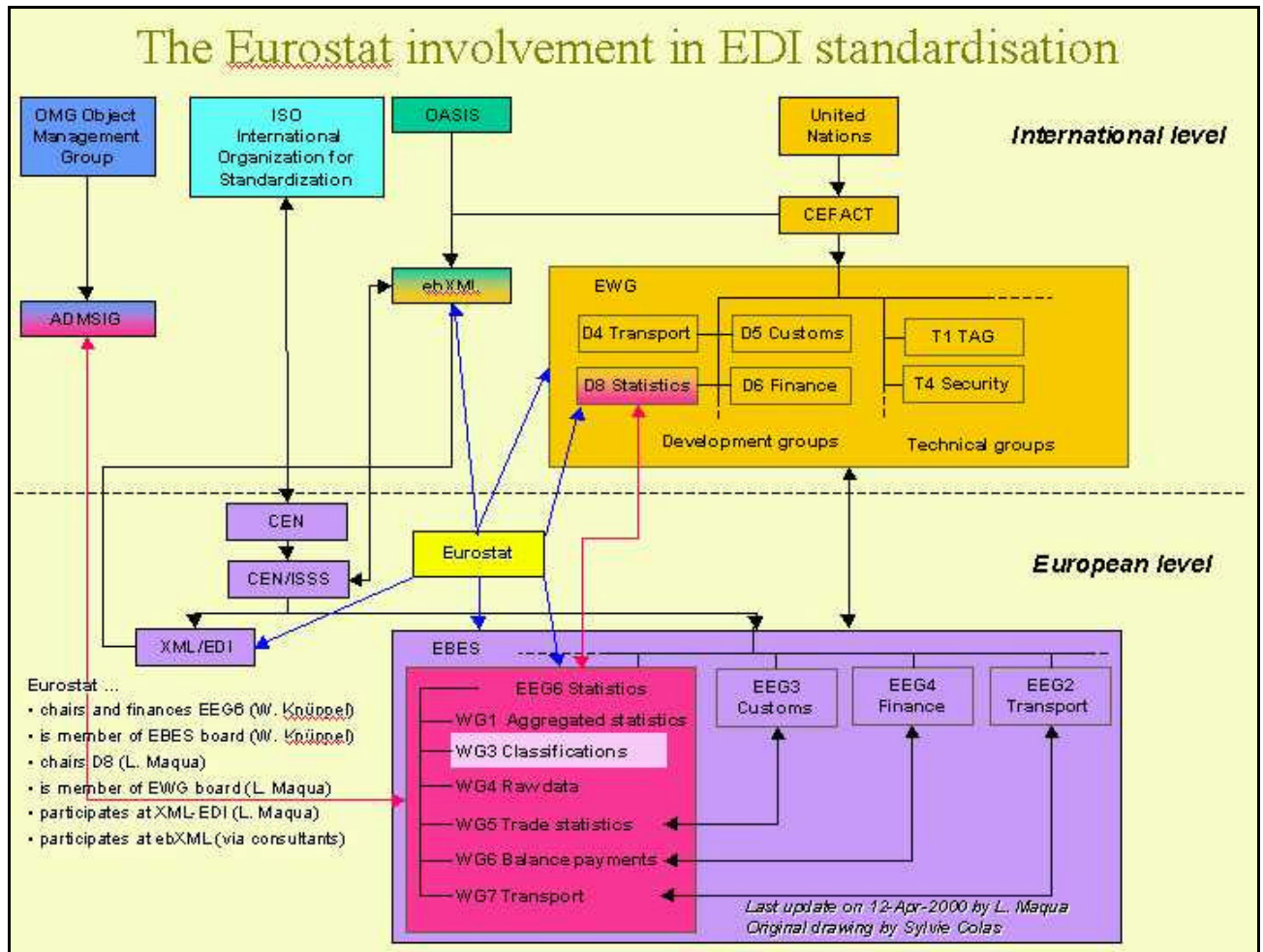
II. EUROSTAT'S STRATEGY IN EDI STANDARDISATION

3. A common object model (in UML, the Unified Modelling Language, recommended by UN/CEFACT) for the data structure gives stability. From this model multiple specifications can be derived to suit different market needs:

- EDIFACT (already completed but needs to be mapped to the API)
- XML - strategic support of ebXML, the joint effort of UN/CEFACT and OASIS
- Native object (e.g. CORBA IDL)

Eurostat ensures that these specifications are adopted by the relevant standardisation bodies.

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III. WHAT IS CLASET?

4. CLASET is an EDI message standardised by the EDIFACT working group of UN/CEFACT. CLASET makes it possible to request, send and receive:

- general information on classifications, e.g. the maintenance agency or the methodology;
- all or part of the content or structure of a classification e.g. a subset;
- data maintenance operations on classifications, e.g. the updates, changes and revisions made last year;
- all or part of the links between classifications;
- and any combination of the above.

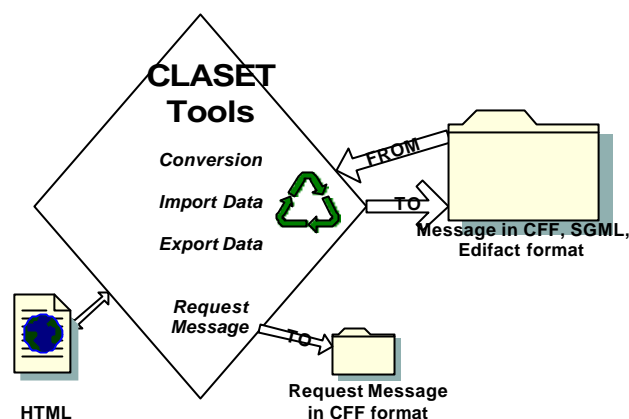
IV. THE DATA MODEL IS THE HEART OF CLASET

5. Its data model makes CLASET independent of the actual syntactical implementation. Currently, CLASET supports UN/EDIFACT, XML, SGML and CFF (Common File Format). CLASET can easily be implemented in new technologies and interfaced with existing classification data bases.

V. THE CLASET TOOLBOX

6. Eurostat has developed a tool box for CLASET (freely available from the Web site, see under "Contacts" below) with the following features:

- Conversion between the different syntax formats
- Import from data bases, esp. RAMON, Eurostat's classification data base
- Export to data bases and to HTML for easy visualisation
- Handling of the request message
- uses built-in MS-Access data base or connects to SQL data bases



CLASET's qualities

CLASET is a good, simple, usable and complete means of classifications data exchange:

- because tools simplify its use;
- because it is well-documented;
- because it is hardware independent;
- because a user often knows one of the four syntaxes in which it is already implemented;
- because UN/EDIFACT standardisation makes it a world-wide norm;
- because it can integrate future technologies.

VI. CONTACTS

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