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COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNECE REGION

Procedure for adopting products and recommendations by the Conference of European
Statisticians

Note by the secretariat

1. BACKGROUND

1. In June 2005, the Conference endorsed the updated Rules governing the work of the Conference and its Bureau (CES/2005/2). According to the Rules, one of the objectives of the Conference is “to discuss and adopt statistical standards in the UNECE region”.

2. Some of the most well known standards adopted by the Conference are the “Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics” and the Census Recommendations. In 2005, the Conference adopted a new classification on transport statistics (NST 2000) and the new classification of the International Statistical Activities.

3. There are two materials under development that will be submitted for endorsement by the Conference in 2006:

- (a) Guidelines on managing confidentiality and microdata access;
- (b) Recommendations for the 2010 censuses on population and housing in the UNECE region.

4. The UNECE Statistical Division has also prepared different types of handbooks,

guidelines, recommendations and best practices that have been approved only by the respective Task Forces, Steering Groups, etc. Such examples include:

- (a) Handbook on Rural Households Livelihood and Well-being;
- (b) Manual on CPI (jointly with ILO, Eurostat, OECD, IMF);
- (c) National practices in Estimating the Non-observed economy in National Accounts;
- (d) Terminology on statistical metadata;
- (e) Guidelines for modelling statistical data and metadata;
- (f) Communicating with the media – Guide for statistical organizations;
- (g) Glossary of terms on statistical data editing;
- (h) Statistical Data Editing Methods and Techniques.

5. There has not been a common procedure for preparing and adopting such materials until now. It is proposed that a formal procedure for the preparation and adoption of the various standards and recommendations by the Conference and its Bureau be adopted by the Conference.

II. TYPES OF PRODUCTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE DEVELOPED UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE CONFERENCE

6. There are basically two types of documents that have been developed so far under the auspices of the Conference:

A. Principles, classifications, standards, manuals, handbooks, recommendations, guidelines and frameworks

7. These products aim at standardizing processes, methods, etc. to ensure comparability among countries. Since they are developed in the UN framework, their implementation is not mandatory. However, adhering to the methods and practices described in these documents is an indication of professionalism and a guarantee to achieve better quality of output. Their aim is to help countries in implementing the agreed principles, classifications, standards, manuals, handbooks, recommendations, guidelines, and frameworks. The documents need to be agreed upon by the experts working in the area and consulted with as wide an audience as possible.

8. It is proposed that these standard documents be adopted/endorsed by the Conference on the recommendation of the Bureau. The Bureau will consider in advance each product that will be presented to the Conference for endorsement.

B. Best practices, surveys of countries' practices, glossaries, etc.

9. These products are supporting materials. Their purpose is to help countries in sharing experience and in implementing the various standards and recommendations (e.g. National practices in estimating the non-observed economy). The aim is to identify what can be considered a good (or best) practice and to widely disseminate the information on that practice.

10. It is proposed that these kinds of documents be endorsed by the relevant Teams of Specialists (Task Forces, Steering Committees and Working Groups) that have developed them and that they be published and disseminated under the responsibility of the Secretariat.

III. PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING PRODUCTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. The following procedure is proposed:

For documents of type A and type B

- (a) the work to develop either of the above-mentioned two types of documents can be initiated by the Conference, its Bureau, or based on a recommendation of an expert meeting or a Team of Specialists.
- (b) the development of the document should be based on Terms of Reference;
- (c) the drafts are to be prepared by a Team of Specialists (usually a Task Force) or by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with experts from countries and international organizations. The drafts should be consulted with the experts working in the area as widely as possible. This can be done through electronic consultation or/and at expert group meetings;
- (d) progress reports on the work should be submitted regularly to the Bureau or to the Conference. Depending on the nature of the document, the Bureau may decide that the document should not be made public before the Bureau approves the final draft;

For documents of type A only

- (e) the Bureau should discuss the final drafts before they are submitted to the Conference for adoption/endorsement;
- (f) the final draft should be circulated to the countries well in advance of the plenary session that will adopt the product to allow enough time for a broad consultation;
- (g) the adoption of the document by the Conference will be reflected in the report;
- (h) documents adopted by the Conference can be attributed to the CES (e.g. CES Guidelines, CES recommendations, etc.).

IV. PROPOSAL

12. This proposal was considered and approved by the CES Bureau at its meeting in February 2006. The Conference is invited to discuss and approve the proposed categories of standard documents and the proposed procedure to be followed for their development and adoption/endorsement.

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