UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

UNECE Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication
(12-14 September 2006, Washington D.C., United States of America)

INFORMATION NOTICE No.1

At the invitation of the Government of the United States of America (USA),
the Work Session will be held at the US Bureau of Labor Statistics,
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Washington DC, USA, from 12 to 14 September 2006.

I.   PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

1.   At its 2005 plenary session, the Conference of European Statisticians included the Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication in its 2005-2006 meeting programme. At the kind invitation of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the meeting will be held from 12 to 14 September 2006 in Washington DC.

2.   The objective of the meeting is to exchange experience in statistical dissemination and communication and to collect and publish best practices, guidelines and recommendations on this topic. The programme of the meeting will focus on strategic and management issues of statistical dissemination and communication. Particular attention will be paid to the growth of electronic dissemination and communication, mainly through the Internet. The experts will also share their experiences in managing public/customer relations in light of increasing expectations of users.

3.   The target audience of the meeting includes managers and experts in national statistical offices responsible for communication, media relations and dissemination, as well as preparing outputs for such dissemination.

II.   AGENDA OF THE MEETING

4.   The programme of the meeting will consist of the following substantive topics:

(i)   Communicating effectively on the Web
(ii)   Statistical literacy
(iii)   How to present metadata
(iv)   Managing revisions and version control to maintain credibility

5.   Detailed explanatory notes on the nature of topics (i) – (iv) are provided in Section VI of this Information Notice.

III.   PARTICIPATION AND ACCREDITATION

6.   Representatives of all Member States of the United Nations and interested intergovernmental organizations are welcome to participate in the meeting. All delegates must be accredited by the competent authority of their country or international organization. All delegates attending the meeting are requested to have a valid passport and, if required, a visa. Applications for visas must be made as soon as possible to the

Embassy of the United States in the country in which the delegates reside, with a reference to the UNECE Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication.

7.   Delegates should complete a Registration Form, which can be found on the last page, and return it to the UNECE Secretariat by 31 May 2006. Those intending to submit a paper should take note of the earlier deadlines and requirements under Section V below.

IV.   ACCOMMODATION

8.   Delegates are requested to make their own accommodation arrangements. Blocks of rooms have been held aside at two hotels, which are a short taxi or subway trip from the meeting venue. Finding rooms in other downtown hotels during this week may be difficult because of a large convention in Washington the same week. Regular room rates have been negotiated at the US Government rate. Details of these hotels will be provided to delegates following receipt of their registration form.

V.   DOCUMENTATION, METHODS OF WORK AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

9.   For each topic on the agenda, the session organizers will invite 2-3 speakers to write an invited paper and to present them at the meeting. All other delegates are welcome to submit a supporting paper on any topic of the agenda.

10.   Invited and supporting papers will be made publicly available on the website of the UNECE Secretariat at: http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2006.09.dissemination.htm. Delegates are encouraged to download the papers from the website and bring their own copies to the meeting. Written papers posted on the website before the meeting will not be distributed in the conference room.

11.   The recommended length for each paper is up to 5 pages. Authors are requested to send an abstract or a short summary of the paper to allow the session organizers to efficiently plan their session (please see the deadlines below).

12.   Authors of invited papers will have not more than 20 minutes to give a presentation on their paper. Authors of supporting papers will have not more than 5 minutes to highlight the main issues raised in their papers. PowerPoint presentations, Adobe Acrobat full screen presentations or A4/letter transparencies may be used. UNECE secretariat cannot provide translation of the presentations.

13.   The following deadlines and requirements apply to the submission of papers and associated presentations:
- The intention to submit a paper should be communicated to the UNECE Secretariat by **1 March 2006**, by completing and returning the attached Registration Form.
- An **abstract** for the paper should be emailed to jessica.gardner@unece.org at the UNECE Secretariat by:
  - **5 May 2006** for **invited** papers;
  - **26 May 2006** for **supporting** papers.
- The **final** papers, not exceeding 5 pages, should be emailed to jessica.gardner@unece.org at the UNECE Secretariat by **28 July 2006 at the latest**.
- Papers should be submitted in Microsoft Word or Rich Text File formats. The UNECE Secretariat will send each author a template containing the header, document number and format.
- Authors who intend to present their written papers are invited to email their on-screen presentations to jessica.gardner@unece.org by **25 August 2006** at the latest, so they can be installed on the projection equipment and a copy of presentation handouts prepared.

14.   The working language of the work session is English. The documents may be submitted in any of the official languages of the UNECE (English, French, Russian), but no translation and interpretation facilities will be available.

VI.   EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE AGENDA

15.   Topic (i): Communicating effectively on the Web

Session Organizers: Colleen Blessing, United States Energy Information Administration and Laurie Brown, United States Social Security Administration
(e-mail: colleen.blessing@eia.doe.gov and laurie.brown@ssa.gov)

16.   As statistical agencies have increased the use of the Web as a medium for dissemination, they have had to rethink how they present their information. Effective Web presentations must consider such issues as usability, accessibility, appropriate writing style, and the non-sequential nature of the Web. The focus of this session will be on the principles of good Web design and presentation, supported by examples.

17.   Papers for this session can address many different aspects of Web presentations. Good graphics, good tables, good writing, good navigation. What can we do to make our electronic information more usable? This session is more than just showing nice pages or new sites; the goal is to illustrate principles with examples--including before and after comparisons to show specific improvements or to contrast good design with bad. The discussion might include usability testing done to determine the most effective presentations and navigation strategies. What did and didn't work with users? Also, how did you determine that your pages weren't communicating effectively? Was the drive to improve communication strategies from internal sources or based on comments from customers?

18.   Topic (ii): Statistical literacy: Is what we have here a failure to communicate?

Session Organizer: Rick Devens, United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and Colleen Flannery, United States Census Bureau
(e-mail: Devens.Richard@bls.gov and colleen.d.flannery@census.gov)

19.   The rapid evolution of communications media has brought many new and disparate audiences into contact with statistical information. The gamut runs from the media to grade school students to community planners. The audiences have changed but have we, the disseminators of the statistical information, changed our methods of communicating with them? Are we using a "one size fits all model" when we write, analyze and interpret statistics for our users?

20.   When we perceive that some portion of our audience lacks statistical understanding, we tend to respond by trying to teach those audiences how to "read" statistics. A discussion of traditional efforts to increase the "statistical literacy of our customers" makes up Part I of this session.

21.   Part II of this session explores how we might change our way of "writing" statistics and what we might do to make our statistical information understandable to a lay audience. While related to the work we have done on statistical storytelling and writing for the World Wide Web, this session focuses on the search for clarity in the official presentation of statistics and analysis, where it may not be suitable to tell stories or give lengthy comparisons, definitions or metadata.

22.   Topic (iii): How to present metadata

Session Organizers: Vicki Crompton, Statistics Canada
(e-mail: vicki.crompton@statcan.ca)

23.   Metadata are, quite simply, information about data.

24.   The evolution of the Internet as the principal dissemination channel for official statistics has required NSOs to adapt their traditional methods of documentation to an electronic environment. As our constituency of users has broadened in both number and diversity, metadata have become an essential tool in assisting these users in the search and navigation of our websites and in the correct interpretation of the statistical information they find.

25.   Papers for this session can address the role of metadata in the domain of search and navigation (site maps, indexing, thesauri, hyperlinks, thematic taxonomies, etc.) or in the domain of data interpretation (concepts and definitions, collection methods, data quality and comparability, etc.) The goal is to share best practices in how we are using metadata to effectively communicate to an increasingly diverse user community the scope of information on our websites, how it can be found and how it can be correctly used.

26.   Anticipating these challenges, the UNECE Work session on Statistical Metadata produced Guidelines for Statistical Metadata on the Internet http://www.unece.org/stats/publ.e.htm in 2000, guidelines which remain relevant today and present an excellent framework for our discussions.

27.   Topic (iv): Managing revisions and version control to maintain credibility

Session Organizers: David Marder, Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom
(e-mail: David.Marder@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

28.   We all know that revisions are not admissions of mistakes but the normal ongoing process of improving the quality of data, but how can we convince all our users that this is the case? How should we be presenting revisions to enhance the credibility of our organizations rather than detract from it? Do NSOs have examples of successful or good practice in expressing revisions? Will we always be dogged by the age-old choice of 'timeliness versus accuracy'?

29.   A whole different scenario can arise though with 'unscheduled revisions' - in other words where we really have made a mistake and need to correct. Here we deserve the hit on our reputation and self-esteem, but can we handle the issue to actually increase the users' trust in our integrity?

30.   The electronic age has made it so much easier for users to access information and for producers to update it and correct it, but can we ensure that our users are aware of the latest version? Do NSOs have systems and procedures to alert users? Are such systems economic? If we don't have systems, do we damage our credibility and reputation? What examples do NSOs have of their attempts to tackle this important issue?

VII.   FURTHER INFORMATION

31.   For further information, please contact the following organizers:

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REGISTRATION FORM

| **Return by:** | **1 March 2006** | for Delegates intending to submit a paper |
| | **31 May 2006** | all other Delegates |

To:	Ms. Jessica Gardner
	Tel: +4122 917 2084
	Fax: +4122 917 0040
	E-mail: jessica.gardner@unece.org

1. Surname (Family name):	Mr. ☐ Ms. ☐	2. First name:
3. Representing (country or organization):		
4. Official function (in home country):		
5. Mailing address:		
6. Tel. No.:	7. Fax No.:	
8. E-mail address:		
9. Date and time of arrival in Washington DC:	10. Date and time of departure from Washington DC:	
11. Special requirements:		
12. Please complete this section **if you intend to present a paper**: Topic: Tentative Title:		

Date _____ _____   Signature _____