

Distr.  
GENERAL

Working Paper No.23  
28 April 2009

ENGLISH ONLY

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

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**

**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)  
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE**

**Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS 2009)**  
(Oslo, Norway, 18-20 May 2009)

Topic (iv): Future work

### **FUTURE OUTPUTS FROM THE MSIS GROUP**

Paper prepared by the MSIS Steering Group

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Over the years the MSIS Work Sessions (and their predecessors) have produced several tangible outputs, typically in the form of published standards and reports. However developments in the field of statistical information systems are relatively rapid, resulting in these outputs becoming less relevant over time. This paper lists outputs from MSIS and other relevant groups, assesses the need for updates, and identifies potential gaps where new outputs may be needed. It also considers the nature and format of those outputs.
2. The 2009 MSIS Work Session is invited to comment on possible future outputs, and their relative priorities. Suggestions for possible outputs in addition to those mentioned in this paper are also welcome.

#### **II. INVENTORY OF PREVIOUS OUTPUTS**

3. The main output produced by the MSIS group (and its predecessors) is the collection of conference papers. These date back to 2000, and are available on the UNECE web site at <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/04.01a.e.htm>. There was an attempt during the period 2002-2004 to supplement this with a web site containing details of good practices, but this was abandoned due to lack of use.
4. The only publication produced by this group in recent years is "Information Systems Architecture for National and International Statistical Offices – Guidelines and Recommendations" This was prepared by Professor Bo Sundgren of Statistics Sweden, and published in 1999, and subsequently endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians. It is available in electronic format at: [http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/information\\_systems\\_architecture/1.e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/information_systems_architecture/1.e.pdf). A limited number of paper copies in English and Russian are available on request from the UNECE Secretariat.
5. Several further publications that are of some relevance to the work of MSIS have been published by other groups reporting to the Conference of European Statisticians, most notably by the METIS group on statistical metadata. Relevant METIS publications include:

- Inventory on International Standards for the Representation of Statistical Data and Metadata (1993). Available in paper format only.
- Guidelines for the Modelling of Statistical Data and Metadata (1995)  
<http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/metadatamodeling.pdf>
- Guidelines for Statistical Metadata on the Internet (2000)  
<http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/metadata.pdf>
- Best Practices in Designing Web Sites for Dissemination of Statistics (2001)  
<http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/websitebestpractice.pdf>
- Recommendations on Formats Relevant to the Downloading of Statistical Data from the Internet (2001)  
<http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/downloadingformats.pdf>
- The METIS Wiki (ongoing) containing national case studies on implementing statistical metadata systems  
<http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/metis/METIS-wiki>

### III. POSSIBLE FUTURE OUTPUTS

6. The MSIS Work Session may decide to:

(i) Revise and update the 1999 publication “Information Systems Architecture for National and International Statistical Offices – Guidelines and Recommendations”;

(ii) Investigate the possibility of flagging certain papers from previous MSIS Work Sessions as representing “good practice”;

(iii) Produce new outputs containing standards or guidelines, or identifying good practices for a particular field of activity of interest to MSIS Work Session delegates.

7. Examples of areas where new outputs could be envisaged are listed below. These are taken mostly from ideas raised in Working Paper 2, “Challenges in Managing Information Systems in Statistical Organizations”, and from the proposals of the Task Force on Software Sharing (Working Paper 9 and addenda). This list is not intended to be exhaustive, merely to stimulate discussion:

- Developing a common high-level business architecture;
- Good practices for systems development;
- Guidelines on the pre-requisites for sharing statistical software;
- Good practices for the shared development and maintenance of statistical software;
- Good practices for ensuring the security of statistical data;
- Guidelines for developing Internet data collection systems;
- Good practices in statistical information systems – Case studies.

8. If one or more topics are chosen for future outputs, the next logical steps are to determine who should produce the output and how. An approach that has worked well with other groups is to set up a small team of volunteers to prepare the output, using audio-conferences and web-based collaboration tools (the UNECE secretariat can provide a wiki-based environment for such purposes).

9. The format of the output should be agreed at an early stage. It may take the form of a traditional paper and/or electronic publication, which would be most relevant for formal standards where the endorsement of the Conference of European Statisticians is sought. It could also take the form of a web site linking relevant documents, or a wiki providing “living” documentation of national systems or practices.