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**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

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

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

Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Seminar on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS)
Sofia, Bulgaria, 21-23 June 2006

Topic (iv): Review and follow-up to the activities of the Conference of European Statisticians

TASK FORCE ON ELECTRONIC DATA REPORTING

Invited Paper prepared by the ECE secretariat

Summary

INTRODUCTION

1. Activities related to electronic data interchange have a long tradition in the UNECE's statistical work programme. Since the early 1990s the UNECE was involved in the development of general standards for the electronic data interchange in statistics project lead by Eurostat. This work is continued by a number of international organizations.
2. In response to the needs of national statistical offices, a work session on statistical data reporting was organized jointly with Eurostat in February 2002 (<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2002.02.edr.htm>). The first work session recommended to follow up on this activity and continue the international exchange of experience.
3. In 2004 the Conference of European Statisticians selected the topic of electronic data reporting as a theme of its seminar at its 2005 plenary session. In concluding the seminar, the Conference decided to continue international cooperation in electronic data reporting with the aim of sharing experience and solutions, making recommendations on specific issues (including security), and exploring possibilities for joint development of open source EDR. Eurostat expressed its willingness to cooperate in the work of the Task Force.

PURPOSE OF THE TASK FORCE

4. The themes identified for the Task Force on Electronic Data Reporting for Primary Data Collection (EDR) are:

- Content:
 - metadata driven generalized system for EDR;
 - common data taxonomies, including their relevance;
 - electronic questionnaire design;
- Techniques:
 - multi-mode surveys with EDR as an option;
 - promoting the EDR response option;
 - XBRL, SDMX and other “pull” techniques;
 - Internet collection for population censuses;
 - security arrangements and their public communication;
 - open-source EDR and case management solutions;
- Organization:
 - linking business reporting and statistical data collection;
 - participating in a Government general approach to EDR;

In an effort to progress the implementation of EDR, other themes that the Task Force may find important may be added to the work plan.

MEMBERSHIP

5. The members of the Task Force will be experts in national and international statistical agencies dealing with methodological and technical issues associated with electronic data reporting. The Task Force would be able to use the networks created through past and present events organized by the Conference and some national statistical offices in related areas, namely:

- Joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Electronic Data Reporting;
- Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Work Sessions on Statistical Metadata (METIS);
- Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meetings on Management of Statistical Information Systems;
- Joint activities on EDR undertaken by the statistical offices of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

WORK PLAN

6. The UNECE secretariat has prepared a preliminary work plan for the Task Force:

- **April – June 2006.** Detailed schedule and work plan;
- **June 2006-October 2006.** A first collection and selection of material on good practices;
- **6-8 November 2006.** Joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Electronic Data Reporting to consider:
 - XBRL and business reporting;
 - EDR for census data;
 - OSS for EDR;
 - Authentication, security and privacy issues.

- **February 2007.** Progress report to the CES Bureau.
- **December 2006 – April 2007.** Final outputs on individual issues listed in the work plan and:
 - a report for the June 2007 Plenary Session of the Conference;
 - a website on good practices and national experiences in the field of EDR (that will become accessible on the public site after the approval of the report).
- **June 2007 – October 2007.** Public version of the report and the website; implementing maintenance mechanism for the website;
- **Late 2007 - Spring 2008.** A possible follow-up Work Session on EDR.

DISCUSSION AT THE METIS WORK SESSION

7. The mandate and work plan of the Task Force were discussed at the 3-7 April 2006 Work Session on Statistical Metadata (METIS), and the following points were made in the discussion:

- (a) Metadata is one of the key roles in EDR. Some of these topics are already covered by the ongoing work on the Common Metadata Framework developed within METIS; they just need to be profiled in order to put the EDR and metadata issues together.
- (b) There may be benefits from a general exchange of experience, but the EDR Task Force should try to concentrate on some specific issues and topics within the overall mandate. It was suggested that the focus should be on the issues for which recommendations or expert input are needed.
- (c) The EDR Task Force will have to define concrete outputs/deliverables. It is understood that the goal of the Task Force is to bring about tangible results quickly and accelerate the implementation of electronic raw data collection.
- (d) Participants mentioned existing activities that should be taken into account by the EDR Task Force. For example, the U.S. agencies are using CASIC – Computer Assisted Information Collection, which combines various EDR techniques. The UNECE group working on recommendations for population censuses could provide input on e-Census. The MSIS work session could include a topic to explore technologies such as XFORMs. The next METIS meeting could have a focus on experiences with metadata and the statistical cycle stage, in particular design and data capture.
- (e) Eurostat will cooperate with the EDR Task Force, and intends to encourage members of its CORD (Coordination of Raw Data Collection) Task Force to participate.
- (f) The representatives of national statistical offices will find out whether there is an interest within their offices and facilitate the contact with the UNECE secretariat.
- (g) The idea of organizing a Work Session on EDR (UNECE jointly with Eurostat) in October/November 2006 was welcomed. It is important to issue the invitations early, in order to allow national statistical offices to prepare their participation.
