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REVISION OF CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS USED IN TRANSPORT STATISTICS

Results of the Ad Hoc Meeting on NST/2000

Note by the secretariats of ECE and Eurostat

NOTE : This document summarizes the discussion and conclusions of the Ad Hoc Meeting on Classification of Goods for Transport Statistics, held in Luxembourg from 4 to 5 May 2000. The ad hoc meeting was convened jointly by Eurostat and by the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe (UN/ECE), following the consideration by the Working Party on Transport Statistics of a proposal submitted by Eurostat during its its fiftieth session (TRANS/WP.6/137 para. 48). The aim of the Ad hoc meeting was to review Eurostat's proposal for a new classification system for commodities in the transport of goods, known provisionally as NST-2000, which would replace the former NST/R. It was hoped that the meeting would be able to reach agreement on NST-2000, after modifications to be discussed and agreed during the meeting. (List of 23 participating countries attached as annex 1).

OPENING OF THE MEETING

1.   The Eurostat unit responsible for nomenclatures gave a brief history of the development of the system of international statistical classifications over the past 30 years,

and underlined the need to replace NST/R with a classification system that was directly linked to international classifications. In addition, according to EU law, statistical product classifications should be based on the CPA. All countries agreed with the following main principles of the NST-2000 classification proposed by Eurostat as a replacement for NST/R:

2.   The criterion for classification of goods should be the economic activity from which the goods originate. This is the same approach as used in the CPA (1996), where the structure (divisions) of CPA is the same as NACE Rev 1. NST-2000 can therefore be based on the CPA categories; the NST-2000 should not be based on the physical form of the goods.

3.   There was some divergence of views on the optimum number of headings. Most countries supported in theory the approach of aiming at a small number of headings suitable for (a) dissemination and (b) economic analysis, forecasting, etc. However, several countries also mentioned groups of goods which were of special importance for their national economies. They would like to distinguish these groups in their national transport statistics. Most countries currently used quite detailed classifications (such as NST/R 3-digit, NHM, etc.) for coding their national data, aggregating to NST/R 24 groups only for transmission of data to Eurostat. Some countries stated that a fairly detailed breakdown at national level (Germany: 30-50 headings) was essential to their own data users, so that the 15 first-level NST-2000 headings would not be sufficient.

4.   In relation to the number of headings, the following conclusions were reached: There should be a first level of NST-2000 based on the Eurostat proposal, with the various adaptations agreed in the course of this meeting. This set of codes would be used for transmission of data to Eurostat, replacing the 24 NST/R groups used in various Directives and Regulations; there should be a second (and possibly third) level of NST-2000, primarily for use at national level, but not excluding the possibility of data collection or data exchange at international level for some transport modes; Eurostat would coordinate the development of the second (and possibly third) level of NST-2000, in cooperation with a group of countries who needed this further breakdown for their own purposes. However, it was agreed that adoption of the first level of NST-2000 should not be conditional on reaching final agreement on the second (and third) levels;

5.   The following options for the second level of NST-2000 were mentioned by Eurostat:

  (i)   use of CPA divisions 01-36 which would result in around 30-40 headings (allowing for some non-CPA headings, see below);
  (ii) the proposal from France, which defines 63 second-level headings defined mainly according to CPA (using a mixture of group, class, and category headings from the CPA). The French proposal is designed to deliver data better adapted to the needs of users than the use of CPA divisions alone;

6.   There was no clear preference for either of these options. It was therefore agreed that Eurostat would convene a group of countries, led by France, to work on the second and third levels of NST-2000. The participating countries agreed on the first-level headings 01 to 16 for NST-2000, as shown in annex 2. There was extensive discussion of the approach to be used for defining some of the headings not defined by reference to the CPA (Groups 12, 14 and 15 in the original Eurostat proposal). These groups had been proposed by Eurostat in order to deal with the tendency for an ever-increasing proportion of goods transported to be classified as "other," for a variety of different reasons.

7.   However, most countries did not like the proposed Group 12 "Goods in containers, etc" , which was intended by Eurostat to cover the situation, common with rail transport, where the transporter did not have information on the nature of the goods being transported. After much discussion, 3 options were identified (see annex 3), together with some variants on these options. Although it appeared that most countries could accept Option 2, some countries continued to argue strongly for Options 1 and 1a. **It was agreed that Eurostat, after reviewing the situation and taking account of available data on the likely importance of these headings, should make a further proposal to complete the first level of NST-2000. It was also agreed that Eurostat will revise the codes, descriptions and notes for the NST-2000 headings, to take account of (a) the terminology used in the CPA and (b) remarks by countries.** Finally, Eurostat presented the following timetable for bringing NST-2000 into use:

1999 (Nov.)	Informal discussion at WP.6 (UN/ECE)
2000	Consultation with: - Member States (via CCST and Working Groups) – candidate countries - original data providers (via industry representatives) - data users inside Commission and outside – international organizations (UN/ECE, ECMT via IWG-Transport) Additional preparatory work by Eurostat: - validation of proposed disaggregation via analysis of historical data – preparation of algorithms for conversion of historical data from NST/R-24 to NST-2000 – preparation of legal act to amend existing Directives and Regulations
2001	Formal adoption of proposal by European Commission, then adoption of legal act by Council and Parliament.
2003 or 2004	Changeover to NST-2000 for all transport statistics collected by Eurostat

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Annex 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

COUNTRIES

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Annex 2

NST-2000 TOP-LEVEL HEADINGS

NST-2000 Groups	Short description	Defined by CPA code and/or other description
01	Agricultural products	01, 02, 05
02	Coal and lignite; peat; crude petroleum and natural gas; uranium and thorium	10, 11, 12
03	Metal ores and other mining and quarrying products	13, 14
04	Food, beverages, tobacco	15, 16
05	Textiles and textile products; leather and leather products	17, 18, 19
06	Wood and products of wood and cork (except furniture); articles of straw and plaiting materials; pulp, paper and paper products; recorded media; (products of) printing services	20, 21, 22
07	Refined petroleum products, etc	23
08	Chemicals, chemical products, rubber and plastic products	24, 25
09	Other non-metallic mineral products	26
10	Basic metals, fabricated metal products	27, 28
11	Transport equipment	34, 35
12	Furniture; other manufactured goods n.e.c.	36
13	Manufactured products: machinery and electronic products	29, 30, 31, 32, 33
14	Secondary raw materials, municipal wastes and other wastes not specified elsewhere in CPA	CPA 37 + municipal wastes (as input to CPA 90) and other wastes not specified elsewhere in CPA
15	Mail, parcels	Normally used for goods transported by postal administrations and specialized courier services in NACE 64
16	Equipment and material utilised in the transport of goods	Such as: empty containers, palettes, boxes, crates, roll cages. Also includes vehicles used to contain goods, where the vehicle is itself carried on another vehicle. Note: the existence of a code for this type of material does not prejudge the question of whether such materials are to be counted as "goods", this will depend on the rules for data collection in each mode of transport.

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Annex 3

**OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH GROUPS 12, 14 AND 15 FROM THE
ORIGINAL EUROSTAT PROPOSAL**

Option 1: this option would define the following groups at the first level of NST-2000:

NST-2000 Groups	Short description	Defined by CPA code and/or other description
17	Goods moved in the course of household and office removals, baggage transported separately from passengers, motor vehicles being moved for repair, and other non-market goods	
18	"grouped goods"*	A mixture of types of goods which are transported together and where it is not considered appropriate to assign the goods separately to groups 01-16.
19	"unidentifiable goods"*	Goods which for any reason cannot be identified and therefore cannot be assigned to groups 01-16. This would include inter alia goods where the transporter does not have information on the type of goods being transported.

Option 1a: as for Option 1, but with the addition of Group 20:

NST-2000 Groups	Short description	Defined by CPA code and/or other description
20	Other goods n.e.s.	

Option 2: similar to Option 1a, but Group 17 is removed and these miscellaneous goods are included under "Other goods n.e.s.:

NST-2000 Groups	Short description	Defined by CPA code and/or other description
17	"grouped goods"*	A mixture of types of goods which are transported together and where it is not considered appropriate to assign the goods separately to groups 01-16.
18	"unidentifiable goods"*	Goods which for any reason cannot be identified and therefore cannot be assigned to groups 01-16. This would include inter alia goods where the transporter does not have information on the type of goods being transported.
19	Other goods n.e.s.	

*provisional description

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