UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Meeting of the Expert Group on
International Statistical Classifications
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Report of the Bureau of the Expert Group on International Statistical
Classifications

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I. Introduction

1. The Bureau of Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications was established as a result of the revision to the Mandate for the Expert Group in 2011.

2. The Bureau distributes tasks, carries out day-to-day management and acts as a bridge between Expert Group meetings and as a relationship manager with agencies developing and maintaining international statistical classifications.

3. The Bureau is supported by the UN Statistics Division, as Secretariat, and it is important to acknowledge the work done in that capacity, without which the Bureau would have difficulty functioning.

4. The present report provides an overview of the main activities overseen and progressed by the Bureau since the 2015 meeting of the Expert Group.

II. Activities for the period 2015-2017

5. As a result of the meeting of the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications in New York on 19-22 May 2015, where a wide range of topics were discussed the Bureau has endeavoured to ensure that work has progressed on those issues and topics where necessary. This includes establishing the scope of and guidelines for the Family of International Statistical Classifications, the review of development and revision work on a number of international classifications in conjunction with their respective custodians, better communication with classification users, national and regional efforts to further progress with the implementation of revised classifications by national statistical agencies, as well as the effective management of classifications.

6. The Expert Group created a number of Technical Subgroups to work on specific issues under the guidance of the Expert Group itself. The Technical Subgroups created were:
   - International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Rev 4.
   - Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP)
   - Central Product Classification (CPC) Ver 2.1
   - Classification by Broad Economic Categories (BEC)

7. The Bureau has enabled the Expert Group to continue to collaborate with, and support the work done by international agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

8. The Bureau has met on a regular basis to ensure that individual work elements were carried out, and that guidance and communication was facilitated for the Expert Group on matters pertaining to international statistical classifications. The minutes of the Bureau meetings and action item lists are circulated to Expert Group members to provide transparency in the process and keep the Expert Group informed on progress in the many areas of work it is involved in.

III.   Work of the Technical Subgroups

A. International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Rev. 4

9.   At the Expert Group meeting in May 2015 UNSD gave a presentation which included the resolution of known issues resolved at the October 2014 face-to-face meeting of the TSG-ISIC. The interpretation questions reflected multiple requests for interpretation of ISIC in specific situations that are not explicitly addressed in the existing ISIC structure, explanatory notes or application rules.

10.   A key discussion point for the Technical Subgroup on ISIC Rev. 4 has been the classification of factoryless goods producers (FGPs), as presented by the UNECE Task Force on Global Production and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts. The TSG-ISIC recommended to the 2015 Expert Group meeting to retain the status quo in ISIC and for further research to be undertaken on FGPs. In the intervening period, the TSG-ISIC has worked on a broad framework of a typology to be discussed at the 2017 meeting and the TSG-ISIC was mandated to continue its work through until the 2017 Expert Group meeting.

11.   The TSG-ISIC has also been working on the appropriateness of retail sales distinguished by sales channels with a view to reporting back at the 2017 meeting.

12.   The ability of UNSD to finalise completion of the ISIC Implementation Guide continues to be a concern for the Bureau. The resource constraints have resulted in delays in progress and have put pressure on the finalisation of the Guide.

B. Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP)

13.   In the 2015-2017 period the TSG-COICOP has been working on phase three of its work program to complete a full review of COICOP of those issues that were not able to be resolved through case law determination.

14.   Global consultation has taken place to ascertain the requirements and needs of national statistical agencies, and to inform decision-making for the TSG-COICOP in resolving issues that have arisen.

15.   The Technical Subgroup has convened in April 2017 to finalise the resolution of known issues and has effectively completed its work.

16.   As a result of this work, the Technical Subgroup is presenting the final COICOP classification to the 2017 Expert Group meeting for endorsement, along with a few outstanding issues for resolution.

C. Central Product Classification (CPC) Ver.2.1

17.   The Technical Subgroup has had to provide advice and resolution on new issues requiring guidance in the use of the CPC, specifically in relation to the work of the World Trade Organisation.

18.   The TSG-CPC has concluded its work.

D. Review of Best Practices

19.   Work has been undertaken to enhance the grading criteria documentation following the 2015 Expert Group meeting. In addition an approval process document for applying the best practice guidelines and grading criteria to enable the Expert Group to endorse/approve a proposed international standard has been drafted for the 2017 Expert Group meeting.

20.   Work on clarifying the scope of the International Family of Classifications and development of an improved UNSD website has been progressed.

E. International Family of Statistical Classifications

21.   The Bureau has continued to coordinate an approach for operationalising the Family of International Statistical Classifications to include all international classifications that represent standards for a given statistical domain, whether explicitly approved by the Statistical Commission (or similar body) or not. The intention is that the family will (a) provide a better overview of what is actually required by countries to follow; (b) will allow an assessment of the quality of classifications according to the list of criteria being developed; (c) will allow a better assessment of the linkages between existing classifications; and (d) will provide more value to users.

22.   UNSD has prepared a first comprehensive draft of a list of classifications in this extended notion of the Family which has been reviewed by the Bureau prior to discussion at the Expert Group meeting.

F. Broad Economic Categories (BEC)

23.   The revision of the BEC has completed and the classification was approved by the UN Statistical Classification at its 2016 meeting. The work of the TSG-BEC is now concluded.

IV.   Other work on International Classifications

24.   The Bureau, on behalf of the Expert Group has continued to liaise and collaborate with custodians who are reviewing their statistical classifications, by providing best practice advice, reviewing the concepts and principles of existing and emerging international classifications; facilitating the harmonization of related classifications; reviewing classifications against the criteria for inclusion in the International Family; and facilitating or undertaking classification reviews where appropriate.

A. International Classification for Time Use Statistics (ICATUS)

25.   The revision of the Trial International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics, continued particularly in relation to the adoption of the new resolution on work statistics, employment and labour underutilization at the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians held in Geneva in October 2013; and comments received from national statistical offices.

26.   The finalization of ICATUS was achieved and the Bureau endorsed the classification on behalf of the Expert Group such that it could be approved at the 2017 meeting of the UN Statistical Commission.

B. OECD Statistical Units Task Force

27.   The Bureau has engaged with, and is supporting the work of, the OECD Task Force regarding a review of the Statistical Units model. The Expert Group is awaiting progress on this work from OECD.

	Existing Action Items	Responsibility	Comments	Date Required
1	Work on raising profile of Expert Group, and of making classifications more relevant and visible	Bureau	Deferred to the next EGM for discussion and action for the 2018 UNSC	Completed
2	ILO to provide specific words for clarifying on grading criteria	ILO	David Hunter to provide words to clarify aspects (on balance) of the criteria document and send to Bureau	Completed
3	Provide any further comments on grading criteria	All	Responses to be sent to Andrew and Ralf	Completed
4	Clarify wording on whether adding levels to a classification makes it derived or not to the grading criteria	NZ	Update section in document and circulate to the Expert Group	Completed
5	Further review definitions of reference, related and derived	All	Responses to be sent to Andrew and Ralf	Completed
6	Add words to enforce/reiterate the need for good documentation for describing changes when deviating from reference classification	NZ	Update of Criteria for inclusion document	Completed
7	Comments on content of family list and propose additions or deletions	All	Everyone to review list presented by UNSD and add/delete as appropriate	Completed
8	Have a common questionnaire for UNSD, UNESCO and FAO on the implementation of international classifications	UNSD/UNESCO/FAO	To be discussed with FAO and UNESCO.	Ongoing
9	Provide feedback to UNSD on Pacific countries participation in national classification questionnaire response	SPC		Completed
10	Send a questionnaire to international custodians to enable updating of the International Family of Classifications	UNSD		Completed
11	Provide feedback to UNSD on African countries participation in national classification questionnaire response	South Africa	To be followed-up with by UNSD	31 Dec 2016
12	Clarify the scope of the Family	Bureau		Ongoing
13	Create broad framework of typology in relation to factory less production and present to the Expert Group	TSG-ISIC		Completed
14	Update the ToR of the TSG-ISIC	Bureau		Completed
15	Discuss approach or resolution for appropriateness of retail sales distinguished by sales channels resolution	TSG-ISIC		Completed
16	Countries to provide information on adoption or use of environmental classifications	All	To be discussed again at the next EGM	Completed
17	Add Norbert to the TSG-ISIC	UNSD		Completed
18	Provide country /national experience or knowledge on factory less producers to UNSD	All		Completed
19	Contact AEG and ISWGNA proposing COICOP review and seek/advise collaboration	NZ		Completed
20	TSG-COICOP report to be passed to IMF	TSG-COICOP		Completed
21	Ensure that Valentina Stoevska at ILO receives TSG-COICOP report and feedback contact for Prices Group	David Hunter	Email circulated to TSG-COICOP Chair	Completed
22	Provide comments to clarify case law decisions as recommended by the TSG-COICOP	All		Completed
23	First draft of revised COICOP	TSG-COICOP		Completed
24	Issues raised by WTO in relation CPC	TSG-CPC		Completed

25	Issues raised on ICT services and need for aggregated view and follow-up on correspondence with EBOPS	TSG-CPC		Completed
26	Information to be provided to TSG_BF to make a deliberation as to whether there is a need to produce a Business Functions classification and make a recommendation to the Expert Group on a way forward.	Ronald Janssen	Work is now commencing on the manual for BF in the Northern Summer of 2017 with completion due by Dec 2018 for the UNSC approval	Completed
27	Send GSIM information to UNGGIM	Sweden		Completed
28	Formalise relationship between UNEGISC and GGIM	NZ		Completed
29	Questions on HS to be circulated to the Expert Group for formal response and guidance to UNSD	UNSD		Ongoing
30	Establish mechanism for approval process for a new member of the International Family of Statistical Classifications	Bureau		Completed
31	Review HS-BEC correspondence for better guidance on dual-use categories etc.	TSG-BEC	In progress	31 Jul 2017
32	TSG prepare BEC draft for Expert Group by end of September	TSG-BEC		Completed
33	EG to approve BEC draft by November	All		Completed
34	TSG-CPC to follow-up on EBOPS -CPC	TSG-CPC	Subsumed into item 25	Completed
35	Provide information on CPC V2.1 changes to Ronald Janssen	TSG-CPC		Completed
36	Establish contact with WCO through Tom Beris	Bureau		Completed
37	Enrico Bisogno to send a link to ICCS	UNODC	Link provided and circulated to EG	Completed
38	Ronald Janssen to invite/enable Expert Group involvement in work team on taxonomy within GWG.	UNSD Trade		Completed
39	SPC and FAO to collaborate on use of CPC in the Pacific	SPC/FAO		Completed
40	EBOPS to CPC concordance	TSG-CPC	Duplicate entry for Item 34	Completed
41	HS to CPC and how differences are to be reconciled to be advised by Expert Group	All	Subsumed into item 29	Completed
42	Expert Group to recommend to ILO that a technical working group be set up for ISCO	All	Following up with ILO that recommendation received	Completed
43	Bureau to discuss potential Expert Group involvement with the working party on the review of ICSE	Bureau	Norbert Rainer added	Completed
44	ILO to provide a draft of the 20th ICLS resolution for Expert Group to comment and input at 2017 meeting	ILO		31 Jul 2017
45	Provide comments on ICATUS	All		Completed
46	EG to be involved in Big Data task team on cross-cutting issues (led by Italy), which includes classifications	UNSD Trade		31 Mar 2017
47	Advise Statistics Canada on where the Canadian reference in the homelessness definition was sourced	New Zealand	Document from Canadian Observatory of Homelessness sent	Completed
48	Progress of Working Group on International Classifications (GTCI)	Mexico	Mexico will keep the Expert Group informed on progress and challenges for GTCI and will collaborate with the FAO	Ongoing
49	Provide links on experiences of GSIM	All		Completed
50	Provide information to complete the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards	UNSD		Completed
51	Bureau to review action points and forward work program and circulate to EG	Bureau		Completed