

The Director-General

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Mr. Paul Cheung  
Director of the United Nations  
Statistics Division (UNSD)  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Two United Nations Plaza DC2-1670  
NEW YORK. NY 10017

Ref: National quality assurance frameworks

Dear Mr. Cheung,



Thank you very much for consulting Eurostat in relation to the discussion paper prepared by Statistics Canada for the 2010 session of the Statistical Commission on a generic National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF). As you are aware we have been consulted at an earlier stage and I appreciate that many of our remarks were incorporated into the paper and welcome the numerous references to the quality work performed within the European Statistical System.

However, my services have also expressed some views of more general nature, which are included in the annex attached to this reply that may serve the future discussion of the project in the various fora.

Yours sincerely,



Walter Radermacher

## **Eurostat remarks on the UN Discussion paper on National Quality Assurance Framework**

### I. Involvement of users

It would be important to involve users in the process of defining the generic NQAF on the way to UN adoption, e.g. through the European Statistical System and individual national statistical institutes (NSIs). Likewise user consultation should be included as a step in the implementation guide (figure 3).

### II. Terminology

The chapter terminology is highly welcome as a further step towards facilitating communication about quality assurance. It is proposed to include further terms and to streamline the whole document accordingly (e.g. with regard to quality guidelines and quality assurance framework as explained below or e.g. quality guidelines and quality tools, currently being grouped together, etc.). Given that the proposed framework excludes management systems and support processes, it could perhaps be more appropriate to refer to it as a "National Statistics Quality Assurance Framework" to distinguish it from a wider scope within a Total Quality Management strategy.

### II. Standard template for the NQAF

The paper proposes a standard template for national quality assurance frameworks as an umbrella for the range of quality initiatives and activities carried out by NSIs. It could thus provide a common language for structuring the various national approaches which would indeed yield the desired advantages mentioned in chapter III. It would be useful to have the case for a common template and the ambition/value added to be rolled out further under background/motivation, thus clarifying that the proposal remains descriptive and does not address the variety of methods and tools nor intends to provide guidance on which approach to be chosen when.

The standard would benefit from some clarification, e.g. related to the intended scope. E.g. Figure 1 delineates the scope more widely than what is actually included in the template in Figure 2. What about assurances e.g. for professional independence, etc.? In any case the scope is different from what Eurostat has proposed in its quality framework for international organisations. This will also need to be addressed.

To be useful and not to put additional burden on NSIs, the template proposed (figure 2) should allow NSIs to easily map their quality approaches along the various headings. This would be in line with the objectives mentioned under I.A. to support NSIs in systematizing existing quality assurance procedures or reflect upon gaps. The structure proposed under quality assurance procedures (Item 3 of figure 2) is pre-dominantly output oriented, following mainly the output quality dimensions (relevance, accuracy, timeliness, etc.). However, NSIs may feel that a process oriented structure of the NQAF, following the statistical value chain, would be more adapted to producers' actual quality approaches and indeed this is how many NSIs present their quality guidelines. Thus, further reflections on the addresses of a NQAF and the value added compared to existing quality guidelines – although this may not be the case for many NSIs – may be needed.