

United Nations Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

Best Practice and Approval Process

Prepared by Andrew Hancock

Chair, UN Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications

Introduction

- ▶ The UN Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications (EG) is the central body for the current and future work on classifications that are the responsibility of the UN Statistics Division.
- ▶ The EG is mandated by the UN Statistical Commission
- ▶ The EG coordinates the international classification review program and administers the International Family of Statistical Classifications
- ▶ The EG provides support to Principle 9 of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics - “The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels”

Role of Expert Group

- ▶ Promote the adoption of best practices in the development of international classifications
- ▶ Coordinate work on standard classifications that are members of the International Family of Statistical Classifications including their review
- ▶ Promote the adoption of international standard classifications by regional and national agencies
- ▶ Maintain the International Family of Statistical Classifications
- ▶ Ensure international standard classifications are fit for purpose and suitable for use across a range of statistical activities
- ▶ Comprises invited representatives from international organisations (such as ILO, UNESCO, WCO), developed and developing countries, national statistical offices, major users and experts, and regional organisations (such as SPC, UNESCAP, UNECLAC)

Why have international statistical classifications?

- ▶ There is a need for standard concepts, definitions and classifications to ensure a consistent approach to classifying statistical data
- ▶ They provide a simplification of the real world and a framework for collecting, organising and analysing data, both statistical and administrative
- ▶ They provide a framework for international comparability
- ▶ They can be used for:
 - ❖ Collecting and organising statistical information in a standard way
 - ❖ Aggregating and disaggregating datasets in meaningful way for complex analysis
 - ❖ Support policy and decision making

What is a statistical classification?

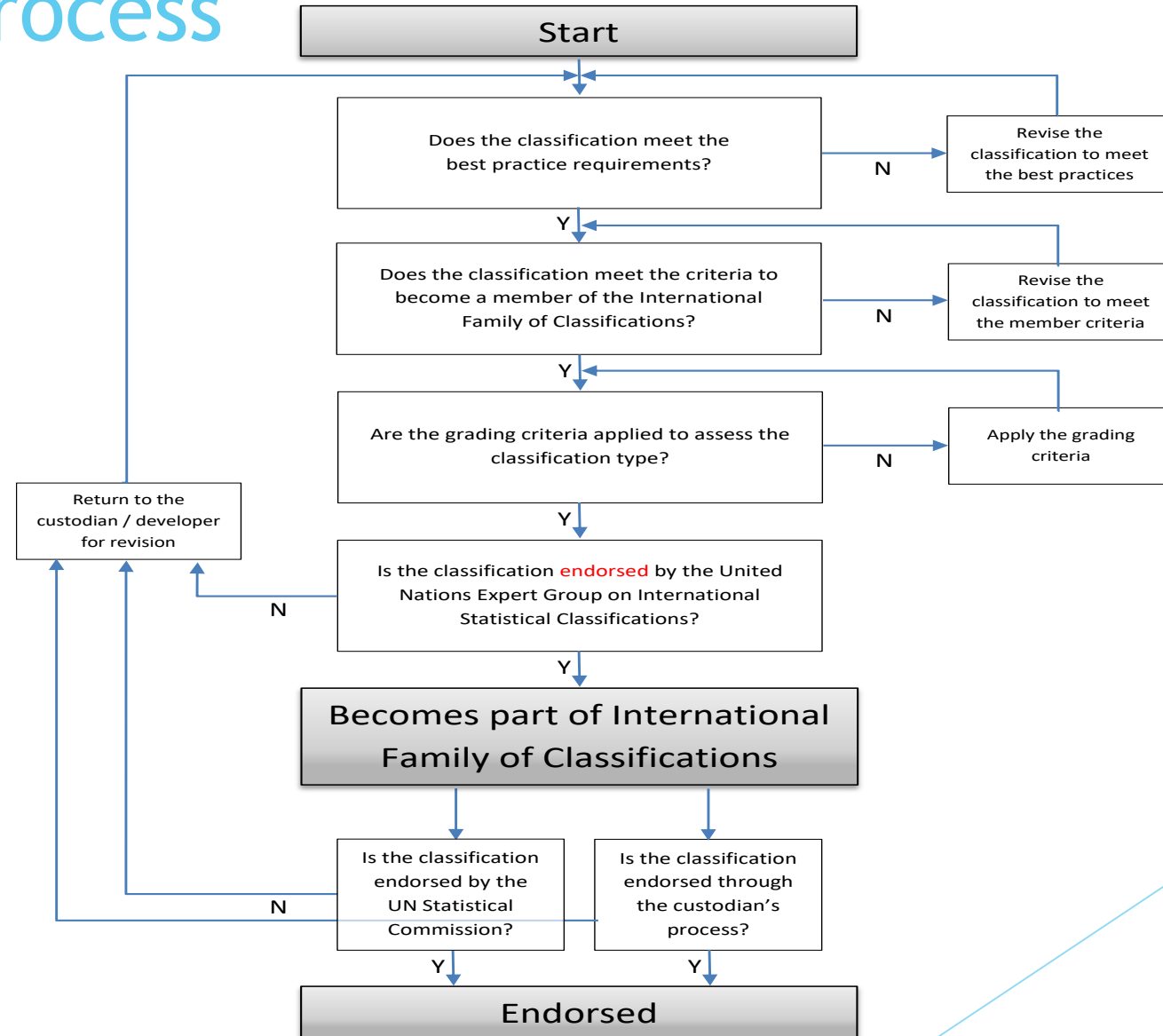
- ▶ “A statistical classification is a set of categories which may be assigned to one or more variables registered in statistical surveys or administrative files, and used in the production and dissemination of statistics. The categories are defined in terms of one or more characteristics of a particular population of units of observation. A statistical classification may have a flat, linear structure or may be hierarchically structured, such that all categories at lower levels are sub-categories of a category at the next level up. The categories at each level of the classification must be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of all objects in the population of interest.”

P5. Best Practice Guidelines for Developing International Statistical Classifications

International Family of Statistical Classifications

- ▶ The International Family of Statistical Classifications represents international standards for a given statistical domain
- ▶ It does not include regional or national classifications
- ▶ Classifications that are included must meet the criteria for inclusion requirements, international best practice principles and the grading criteria
- ▶ Classifications are designated as reference, derived or related and may be approved by the custodians governing body or the UN Statistical Commission

Approval Process



Best Practice Principles

- ▶ The Expert Group oversees the application of best practice principles in the development of international statistical classifications.
- ▶ Each international statistical classification must:
 - ❖ Have a consistent conceptual basis
 - ❖ Have a flat or hierarchic structure
 - ❖ Have categories that are mutually exclusive
 - ❖ Have definitions that are clear and unambiguous
 - ❖ Be up-to-date and relevant content
 - ❖ Last for a period of time
 - ❖ Meet user needs
 - ❖ Provide comparability over time and between collections

Approval Criteria Checklist

| Criteria | Y/N | Comments |
|-----------------------------------|-----|--|
| Custodian of the classification | | There must be a custodian Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Primary use of the classification | | The use of the classification in statistical and non-statistical environments should be documented Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Conceptual basis | | The major concepts that are used for developing the classification must be clearly defined and documented Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Statistical Unit | | The statistical units for the primary application of the classification have to be clearly identified Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Scope of the classification | | The scope of the classification must be clearly documented Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Classification levels | | The number of levels should be documented Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Classification categories | | The classification categories must be precise and accurate, and mutually exclusive Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Format of Classification codes | | The code structure of the classification must be easy to understand Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Statistical Balance | | The classification should be statistically balanced Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Consultation process | | There should be full consultation with national users and national statistical offices Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Testing of the classification | | The classification has been widely tested by users for suitability Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Correspondences | | There must be correspondences between old and new versions, and related reference classifications Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Implementation Plan | | A clear and timetabled implementation plan is required Mandatory ie must be Yes |
| Maintenance Schedule | | There should be a documented maintenance strategy Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |
| Dissemination | | Guides, tools and other supporting material should be available for users Discretionary ie can be Yes or No |

Grading Criteria

The grading criteria is applied to determine the classification's status within the International Family of Statistical Classifications

- ▶ Is the classification to be considered as an international reference classification?
- ▶ Is the classification to be considered as an international derived or related classification?
- ▶ Is the classification to be considered as some other form of classification?

Technical Sub-Groups/Task Teams

- ▶ The Expert Group can decide if certain technical, analytical or exploratory tasks can be carried out by a suitable subgroup or task team?
- ▶ The Expert Group specifies the goals, tasks and lifespan of the subgroup or task team through a terms of reference
- ▶ The composition of the subgroup or task team is sourced from Expert Group members in the first instance and subject-matter experts from relevant agencies
- ▶ Interaction or alignment with other relevant task teams is sought to reduce duplication of effort
- ▶ The subgroup or task team must report back to the Expert Group for evaluation of their tasks and for approval of any findings or decisions.
- ▶ UNSD acts as Secretariat for the subgroup or task team

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