

UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications
25-28 October 2022 Meeting - New York, NY

Background Document to Session 3

International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities Future work

Introduction

1. With the finalization of the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), elements of the future work related to the implementation, maintenance and update of the classifications should be discussed by the UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications. This note presents some of elements of the future work programme on ISIC in order to seek guidance from the Committee, in particular, the implementation of the revised ISIC, and its revision cycle.

Implementation of the revised ISIC

2. With the adoption of a new version of the classification, it is important to develop a work programme to support its implementation. The efforts to be undertaken to assist countries in the implementation of the revised classification need to be seen in the context of overall strengthening of statistical capacity and the development of coherent and integrated economic statistics programmes. This process needs to be coordinated at a high level, engaging not only the national statistical offices (NSOs), but also other statistical data providers and of economic statistics.

3. The main tools for supporting the global implementation of ISIC, as with those used for the implementation of ISIC Rev. 4 (See [E/CN.3/2007/10](#)), include three main elements :

- i. publication of manuals (such as an implementation guide for ISIC), handbooks and other classifications tools (such as additional correspondences, alphabetical indexes, discussion forum; registry, classification hotline, and modern tools to facilitate the dissemination and use of classifications (e.g. APIs), etc.);
- ii. organization of meetings, training seminars and workshops on classifications; and
- iii. technical cooperation in individual countries.

4. These efforts should support the development of national and regional industry classifications or adaptations of ISIC, as well as the application of these classifications in statistical programmes such as the implementation in statistical business registers, and economic censuses and economic surveys, the production of backcasting data.

5. In addition, a timetable should be elaborated for the implementation of the revised ISIC which include the following milestones: adapting national classifications; adaptation of business registers (where existing); use of revised ISIC in statistical programmes; use of revised ISIC in national accounts; use in population census, international reporting requirements and so forth.

6. Part of the implementation plan for the revised ISIC should also include a regular global assessment of the implementation of international classifications.

Revision cycle

7. The discussion during the revision of ISIC revealed the need for periodic reviews of the structure and definition of its categories and underlying principles. The timing of future revisions has to be predictable to allow long-range planning and commitment of necessary resources for countries and discussions of desired changes in the international and multinational classifications. The coordination with the revision cycle of other major derived and related industry classifications, such as NACE or NAICS, as well as national classifications is particularly important. In addition, the revision of ISIC should occur in conjunction with revisions of the Central Product Classification (CPC) given their strong linkages.

8. The convergence between these classifications and their classification principles should always be an aim during the revision of ISIC. The examination of underlying concepts and principles at an early stage of the revision process is vital to achieve better harmonization between these classifications and would contribute to their future convergence. The strong relation between ISIC and NACE should be maintained.

9. It is therefore suggested that the feasibility of developing a regular revision cycle for ISIC is considered, taking into account the revision cycle of other major derived and related classifications and frameworks e.g. SNA, BPM. In order to support any regular revision cycle, it is important to develop an infrastructure that allows ongoing discussion on timing of revisions, resolution and advice on current and emerging issues, and which provides rulings and clarifications on the classification. A number of tools were put in place by UNSD, such as: the establishment of a classification hotline to receive questions on classifications; the maintenance of a registry where decisions and clarification are recorded and disseminated; the establishment of a forum to discuss questions about the classification. However, the establishment of a standing task team dedicated to ISIC that regularly reports to the CEISC could be beneficial for the ongoing maintenance and updating of the classification along with uptake of newer technological solutions.

Questions for the Committee

10. The UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications is invited to express its view on the following points:

- i. The need to develop an implementation plan for the revised ISIC and what additional elements should be included in the implementation plan
- ii. The need and feasibility of establishing a regular revision cycle for ISIC
- iii. The need to establish a standing task team on ISIC in support of the implementation and maintenance of the classification.
- iv. The need for a research agenda for issues/topics/approaches for ISIC