United Nations Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications

Prepared by Andrew Hancock

Chair, UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications

Introduction to the UNCEISC

▶ The UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications (UNCEISC) is the central body for the current and future work on classifications that are the responsibility of the UN Statistics Division

▶ Is mandated by the UN Statistical Commission

▶ Comprises representatives from national statistical offices and international agencies (such as ECLAC, WHO, OECD) and is supported by a Bureau and UNSD as Secretariat

▶ Supports 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 the CEISC

- 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 implementation of international standard classifications by regional and national agencies
- Administer and 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

UNCEISC and Recent Activities

▶ Have initiated or progressed revisions of the:

  ▶ Classification of Functions of Government (COFOG)

  ▶ Central Product Classification (CPC) V3.0

  ▶ Standard International Energy Product Classification (SIEC)

  ▶ Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA) V2.0

▶ Have engaged in supporting the:

  ▶ International Classification Standard for Administrative Data on Trafficking in Persons (ICS-TIP)

  ▶ IUCN Global Ecology Typology (IUCN-GET)

  ▶ International Classification of Violence Against Children (ICVAC)

  ▶ Classification of Environmental Purposes (CEP)

  ▶ International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS)

Other UNCEISC Activities

- Have initiated revisions of the:
  - International Family of Statistical Classifications
  - Best Practice Principles for International Statistical Classifications

- Engaged with other classification related projects
  - Working Group for the Revision of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)
  - Working Group for the Revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)
  - UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics
  - International Classification of Dying Places

CEISC Research Agenda

- What is the purpose of an international statistical classification?
  - What do developing countries really need?
  - What are the international reporting requirements?
- Should international classifications be expanded to accommodate code issues?
  - More level 1 groups
  - More levels eg ISIC goes from 4 to 5 levels
- Are revision cycles still needed in the traditional sense?
  - Optimal timing
  - Alignment between like classifications
  - Clarity of scope
- How can better version control measures be introduced?
- Should the definition of a statistical classification be revised?
- How do we modernise best practice principles?

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 endorsed by the CEISC and then approved by the UN Statistical Commission

- The International Family of Statistical Classifications has recently be restructured according to the Classification of Statistical Activities V2.0 https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Family

Why have international statistical classifications?

There is a need for shared concepts, definitions and classifications to ensure a consistent approach to classifying data to support global policy initiatives

They provide a simplification of the real world and a framework for collection, organising and analysing data, both statistical and administrative, and are the cornerstone of official statistics

They provide a framework for international comparability and a basis for national development

They can be used for:

| Collecting and organising statistical information in a standard way | Aggregating and disaggregating datasets in meaningful ways for complex analysis | Supporting policy and decision making | Assisting developed countries and their Official Statistics programs |

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

Best Practice Principles

▶ The CEISC oversees the application of best practice principles in the development of international statistical classifications.

▶ Best practice guidance is available on the UNSD Website https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices

▶ A new Task Team (TT-BPIFC) has been set up to review the best practice documents and the International family of 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

Task Team – BPaIFC

- This is a task team set up to update best practice guidelines to reflect modernised approaches, and increased use of administrative classifications

- Key tasks are:
  - Determine process and methodology for maintaining the IFC
  - Review guidance documents on development of classifications
  - Review all best practice documentation and update
  - Review approval process for international statistical classifications

- Important for regional areas to provide feedback to (and be part of) the task team and inform UNSD of issues

- Reports to the CEISC

Best Practice and the need to modernise

▶ It is not solely about tools, platforms or web services

▶ Understanding what a classification represents in the 21st century statistical world and adapting best practice accordingly

▶ Moving away from one size fits-all hierarchies

▶ Developed country need has to be secondary to developing country need

▶ Reducing complexity in the existing international classifications

▶ Looking at other ways of delivering the same with reduced cost, time and process

▶ Keeping up with the real world and not producing classifications which are already out of date on release

▶ Working collaboratively across the global statistical system

Approval Process

▶ The current Approval Process for an International Statistical Classification can be found at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/expertgroup/egm2017/ac340-11.PDF

▶ A member of the CEISC Bureau will usually do the review of the process and compile a checklist and recommendation for approval by the CEISC

▶ The approval process is made up of three parts:

  ❖ Best Practice Guidelines for Developing International Statistical Classifications

  ❖ Criteria to become a Member of the International Family of Classifications

  ❖ Grading Criteria for International Statistical Classifications

Criteria for Approval Checklist

Criteria	Y/N	Requirements
Custodian of the classification	Y	There must be a custodian.
Primary use of the classification	Y	The use of the classification in statistical and non-statistical environments should be documented.
Conceptual basis	Y	The major concepts that are used for developing the classification must be clearly defined and documented.
Scope of the classification	Y	The scope of the classification must be clearly documented.
Statistical Unit	Y	The statistical units for the primary application of the classification have to be clearly identified.
Classification levels	Y	The number of levels should be documented.
Classification categories	Y	The classification categories must be precise and accurate, and mutually exclusive.
Format of Classification codes	Y	The code structure of the classification must be easy to understand.
Statistical Balance	Y	The classification should be statistically balanced.
Consultation process	Y	There should be full consultation with national users and national statistical offices.
Testing of the classification	Y	The classification has been widely tested by users for suitability.
Concordances	Y	There must be correspondences between old and new versions, and related reference classifications.
Implementation Plan	Y	A clear and timetabled implementation plan is required.
Maintenance Schedule	Y	There should be a documented maintenance strategy.
Dissemination		Guides, tools and other supporting material should be available for users.

Standing Task Team – STT-ISIC-CPC

► This is a new initiative created for ongoing work on ISIC and CPC https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_56/documents/BG-3o-TOR_STT-ISIC-CPC-E.pdf

► Created because of linkages between industries and products, and makes sense to maintain/update in parallel

► Key tasks are:

  ► Develop a strategy for ISIC and CPC revision cycle

  ► Maintain and update ISIC Rev 5 and CPC V3.0

  ► Carry out revision when deemed necessary

  ► Conduct research on pending and emerging issues, assess their impact and recommend treatment

  ► Assist in implementing ISIC Rev 5 and CPC V3.0

► Important for regional areas to provide feedback to (and be part of) the task team and inform UNSD of issues

► Is a permanent task team reporting to the CEISC

► Chaired by Grant Arnold (ABS)

United Nations Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications