



UN Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
Comments on NQAFs (received in response to the questions in the
13 August 2010 EG launch letter/e-mail):
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe(UNECE):
Steven Vale, 3 September 2010

Please find below my answers to the four questions in your e-mail, on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe:

- What are your country's or agency's experiences – if any – with the development or use of an NQAF?

We have developed a quality framework for data work within the UNECE. This is more or less in line with the quality frameworks of other international organisations, and with the recommendations of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (copy of the [2010 version attached](#)). By structuring this document at several levels, from broad and abstract principles, to specific and concrete actions, we have been able to identify and act on priority areas. Priorities are defined mainly in response to user feedback, and the whole framework is reviewed every year. We have used this approach for the last 3 years, and consider that it has been quite successful.

We have also developed, (with the Conference of European Statisticians Steering Group on Statistical Metadata), the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (www.unece.org/stats/gsbpm), which is increasingly being used in a number of national and international statistical organisations as a framework for process quality management.

- What problems and obstacles have you experienced or anticipate experiencing in developing and implementing an NQAF?

When we started this work, the concept of a quality assurance framework was new to most staff. The first challenge was to get a common understanding about what quality is (and that it is a wider concept than just accuracy). We organised workshop sessions to help staff understand the real nature and importance of quality, and to get their input to the quality strategy and the annual quality improvement programmes.

Since then the main obstacle has been lack of resources to implement all of the quality improvements that we would like to. This has meant that we have had to carefully prioritise improvements on a cost / benefit basis.

- What are the main needs and priorities from a country perspective vis-à-vis the development and implementation of an NQAF?

This question is perhaps not so relevant for an international organisation, but based on my previous experiences in a national statistical organisation, I would say that international standards, as well as detailed supporting material on how to interpret and implement them are the most essential requirement. Training and opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences are also high on the list.

Different requirements from different international organisations can be a problem - this is illustrated by the differences between proposals 2 and 3 in the Canadian paper. Harmonisation of these requirements, and the development of a single NQAF that will meet all of them would be a big help.

- What are your initial comments regarding the three proposed templates for a generic NQAF presented in the Statistics Canada report <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc10/2010-2->



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NQAF-E.pdf? (All three templates share a basic structure but differ in the way in which quality assurance procedures are presented).

Linked to the last paragraph of my answer to the previous question, rather than choose one of the three options, I would prefer a 4th option that builds on all three and meets all requirements. Whether that is possible in practice is another question!

Best regards,

Steve

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