



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Expert Group Meeting on National Quality Assurance Frameworks (NQAF)
New York, 28-30 September 2011

Report of the Expert Group Meeting

The meeting of the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks (NQAF), organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), was held in New York from 28 to 30 September 2011.

Nine participants from the following eight countries attended the meeting: Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and Ukraine. Participants from the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as staff members of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) also were in attendance. The list of the 16 participants is shown in Annex 2.

Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Chief of the Statistical Services Branch, UNSD, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of UNSD, who was out of the country on official business.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Claude Julien, Director of the Business Survey Methods Division and Head of the Quality Secretariat of Statistics Canada.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss and finalize various elements of the group's work that had up until the meeting been discussed exclusively via e-mail exchanges, i.e. the template for a generic national quality assurance framework; the accompanying guidelines for the template; the glossary of currently used quality terminology; the mapping of the NQAF template to existing frameworks; and the NQAF website as a platform for the exchange of information and experiences on national and international quality assurance work. The group's work at the meeting would result in the preparation of a document, "Guidelines for the Template for a Generic National Quality Assurance Framework" that would be made available for a global consultation process, after which it would be made available at the Statistical Commission as a background paper and posted on the NQAF website with the other outputs of the Expert Group.

After a brief summary of all of the work that had been carried out between the time the expert group was established by the Statistical Commission in September 2010 and the current date was made by UNSD, the proposed agenda was adopted.

Discussion of the NQAF template started with the group recalling that the template now under discussion had originally been based upon the three proposals for a generic national quality

assurance framework template put forth by Statistics Canada in its programme review document for the Statistical Commission in 2011, i.e. the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP); the International Monetary Fund's Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF); and Statistics Canada's quality assurance framework. Statistics Canada had proposed that a template could be developed broken down into the following five suggested sections: (i) Introduction; (ii) Quality concepts and instruments; (iii) Quality assurance procedures; (iv) Quality assessment; and (v) Quality and performance management and improvement. When the Expert Group first began its work, it agreed to adopt the suggested structure by Statistics Canada as a basis for its discussions. Furthermore, since the three proposals all shared the same basic structure but differed only in the way the quality assurance procedures were presented in the third section, the development of the section on quality assurance was the agreed main focus of the work of the Expert Group, along with the second section on quality concepts and instruments.

The NQAF template had gone through several variations which had been discussed and agreed to via email. A new fourth version, which incorporated the different aspects of each of the three proposals resulted, with an additional section included on *improving the statistical system* to highlight that in addition to national statistical offices, other agencies play important roles in countries in the development, production and dissemination of official statistics. At the meeting the group reviewed several outstanding issues with the template's wording and order of the some of the original quality assurance's section's 21 "EG lines/NQAF lines¹", that were not able to be decided during the e-mail discussions. The group agreed to the reordering or shortening of the wording of several of the lines and some minor rewording of lines (e.g. *statistical infrastructure* was changed to *statistical standards*; *managing provider relationships* was changed to *managing respondent burden*). The entry for *ethical standards* was moved from the quality assurance section to the quality and performance management section, the two separate lines for *accessibility and clarity* were combined into one (following in the European Statistics Code of Practice) and *interpretability* which was assumed to be already covered sufficiently under clarity was deleted.

Discussion of section two, *quality concepts and frameworks*, entailed a quick review of the online NQAF glossary that the group had developed. It was acknowledged that this was an ongoing exercise, and that ECE would work with UNSD to finalize some outstanding issues after the meeting. A review of the mapping exercise of the NQAF with the IMF's Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF), the European Statistical System's Code of Practice, the template based on Statistics Canada's quality assurance framework as presented in its 2010 report to the UN Statistical Commission, and the Proposal for the Structure of a Regional Code of Good Statistical Practice for Latin America and the Caribbean followed, with no outstanding issues. The group agreed on the topics that would be briefly described in the guideline document under sections four (*quality assessment and reporting*) and five (*quality and other management frameworks*), and Eurostat and Statistics Canada agreed to draft those sections for the guideline document.

¹ For ease of discussion, each of the lines in the template's section 3 had been coded, starting with "EG" for "Expert Group" followed by numbers. At the meeting, the group agreed that "EG" should be replaced with "NQAF" for "National Quality Assurance Frameworks".

Most of the remainder of the time was spent on agreeing on the content, consistent wording and presentation of the NQAF lines in the guideline document. It was agreed that all outputs of the Expert Group would be made accessible at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/QualityNQAF/nqaf.aspx> . It was understood that after the texts, which had been written up by members of the expert group for all of the individual NQAF lines (descriptions, elements to be assured, supporting mechanisms, and specific selected references), were finalized by UNSD, the final NQAF generic template, the guidelines (made up of the template and the NQAF descriptions), the online glossary, the mapping and the NQAF website itself would undergo a global consultation process. The feedback received from the global consultation would be taken into account when the report to the 2012 Statistical Commission was prepared.

A presentation was then made by the representative from Eurostat to update the Expert Group on the work of the European Statistical System's Sponsorship on Quality, which was involved in work in the following three areas: Theme I: Quality framework and the Code of Practice; Theme II: Quality assurance framework; and Theme III: Communicating quality. The Group was informed that the Sponsorship had recently completed its work on the revision (limited modifications) of the European Statistics Code of Practice which, once adopted, will set the standard for future statistical development, including the planned revision of the Statistical Law and the development of Commitments on Confidence in Statistics with its Member States.

The meeting was closed by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest who thanked all of the participants for their hard work prior to and during the meeting, and acknowledged also the very valuable contributions of the other members of the Expert Group who had been unable to participate in the meeting.

Annex 1 – Agenda

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Expert Group Meeting on National Quality Assurance Frameworks
New York, 28-30 September 2011
DC2-1684 (Conference Room)

Preliminary Agenda

Wednesday, 28 September 2011

- 09:00 - 09:30** **Opening of the Meeting** (Paul Cheung, Director of UNSD)
- Introduction of participants
 - Progress report
 - Adoption of agenda
- 09:30 - 10:45** **Generic National Quality Assurance Framework Template**
Finalization of the wording and order of the template's lines
- 10:45 - 11:10** **Coffee break**
- 11:10 – 13:00** **Template Guidelines: Quality Assurance Procedures**
- Mapping of the EG NQAF template lines 1-21 to existing frameworks (DQAF, CoP, Latin America and the Caribbean's proposal for a regional code of good statistical practices)
 - "Improving the statistical system" - EG1-EG3
- 13:00 – 14:00** **Lunch break**
- 14:00 – 15:30** **Template Guidelines: Quality Assurance Procedures** (continued)
"Managing the institutional environment" - EG4-EG10
- 15:30 – 16:00** **Coffee break**
- 16:00 – 18:00** **Template Guidelines: Quality Assurance Procedures** (continued)
"Managing statistical processes" - EG11-EG14

Thursday, 29 September 2011

- 09:00 - 10:00** **Template Guidelines: Quality Assurance Procedures** (continued)
"Managing statistical outputs, including metadata" - EG15-EG21
- 10:00 – 10:45** **Discussion of Part 1 of the Template Guideline document**
Introduction
- 10:45 - 11:10** **Coffee break**
- 11:10 – 13:00** **Discussion of Part 2 of the Template Guideline document**
- Quality concepts and instruments
 - EG Glossary on the NQAF website

Thursday, 29 September 2011 (continued)

- 13:00 – 14:00** **Lunch break**
- 14:00 – 15:30** **Discussion of Part 4 of the Template Guideline document**
- Quality assessment
- 15:30 – 16:00** **Coffee break**
- 16:00 – 18:00** **Discussion of Part 5 of the Template Guideline document**
- Quality and performance management and improvement

Friday, 30 September 2011

- 09:00 - 10:30** **Country and agency developments and new initiatives in quality assurance**
- Interventions
- 10:30 - 11:30** **Discussion of the Statistical Commission 2012 report**
- 11:30 - 11:50** **Coffee break**
- 11:50 – 13:30** **Discussion of the next steps**

Annex 2 – List of Participants

Expert Group Meeting on National Quality Assurance Frameworks New York, 28-30 September 2011

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