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Oslo Group discusses new work programme at its 9th meeting

The Oslo Group on Energy Statistics was set up by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2005 and remains a key forum where countries can share best practices. Originally given a mandate to set international standards and methods in energy statistics, the group is currently identifying future avenues for collaboration, with the ultimate goal of improving international energy statistics.

The 9th Oslo Group meeting was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 5-8 May and was hosted by the UAE's National Bureau of Statistics together with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Corporation. The meeting gathered 35 representatives from 21 countries and six international organizations (UNSD, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Statistical Office of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC-STAT)). While previous meetings of the Oslo Group had concentrated on the drafting and review of first the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics and latterly the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (see next article), this meeting concentrated on exploring possible new areas of collaboration for the group. The topics discussed were energy indicators, energy prices, the use of administrative data sources, the collection of data on renewable energy, electronic data exchanges, data dissemination and quality reviews of energy data.

There was a lot of interest expressed by Oslo Group members on **energy indicators**. There are many types of energy indicators, and it was suggested that the Oslo Group could work to organize and classify indicators to make it easier for countries to identify ones they are interested in. The Oslo Group recognised that it should not necessarily be making recommendations for countries to follow, but a "menu" of indicators could be developed to act as guidance.

While not all Oslo Group members are active in the field of **energy prices**, there was a large amount of interest expressed in moving forward on this topic. A principal challenge to collecting meaningful statistics on energy prices and taxes in some countries is the prevalence of energy subsidies. The Oslo Group should scope out the issues, needs, and opportunities relating to energy prices, and develop a structured approach.

The **use of administrative data sources** for energy data collection and/or data validation was of particular interest to Oslo Group members, as many countries are moving towards the greater use of administrative data sources. It was noted that there are many opportunities and challenges that will have to be addressed, and the Oslo Group should be able to provide a practical and useful contribution. The Oslo Group should not focus on the development of generic recommendations or standards, as each country has its own unique needs and institutional arrangements relating to administrative data. Rather, the Oslo Group should look towards organizing and sharing country practices, and discussing the benefits and challenges in using administrative sources. Some of the common considerations that could be addressed include: the legal basis for sharing data, methodologies that can be used, the challenges and opportunities of the data revolution (including "big data"), and data confidentiality.

The collection of data on **renewable energies** is considered an area of growing interest and priority for many countries and organisations. However, a lot of work is currently underway in many international organizations, such as the IEA, Eurostat, IRENA and UNSD. The Oslo Group does not want to duplicate or re-invent these efforts, and encouraged these various organizations to further collaborate in order to harmonize efforts, methodology and collection procedures.

On the topic of implementing the system of Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (**SDMX)** in energy statistics**,** it was agreed that internationally-agreed energy-specific definitions for SDMX would be useful in the future. Unlike some other areas of international statistics, much of the necessary definition harmonisation between relevant stakeholders has already been completed with the creation of IRES, and so implementation would not need to be too long a process.

There were several practical issues and concerns raised relating to **energy data dissemination,** where the Oslo Group could make a useful contribution. Examples include (but are not limited to): data confidentiality and suppression, timeliness, the particular challenges of disseminating administrative data, issues specifically relating to electronic dissemination, countries' and organizations' revision policies, metadata, the use of social media, and broadening access to data (and reducing barriers to access). A working group will be established to review these ideas and determine how the Oslo Group can make useful contributions, where to start, and which issues should be the priorities.

All members agreed that ensuring **energy data quality** is an ongoing and important responsibility of energy statistics programmes. Country approaches and experiences should be shared. There are already many good examples of quality assurance frameworks and strategies available from a variety of countries and organizations. The Oslo Group should not look to re-invent this well-established body of work, but rather should focus on energy-specific examples. Are there standards, principles, indicators or practices in the energy domain that could be shared? What are the weaknesses and strengths of each? A working group will be established to follow-up on these ideas and to develop an approach for future work of the Oslo Group.

After having explored each of these topics, the Oslo Group will now develop a work plan for the coming year on which subjects it plans to take forward, and how. For chosen topics, work groups will be set up to look deeper into these subjects, and report back to the full Oslo Group at its next meeting.

The next Oslo Group meeting will be hosted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico in 2015.

Progress on the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual

Background

As mentioned in the article above, at its 9th meeting, the Oslo Group followed up on further progress made with the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (ESCM), after its chapters had been planned and reviewed at multiple previous meetings. UNSD provided an update on progress since the last meeting, and suggested a path forward for finalisation of the manual before the next Oslo Group meeting.

Following the 8th meeting in Azerbaijan in September 2013 where each draft chapter was reviewed and discussed in detail, UNSD met with the OG Chair and Secretariat from Statistics Canada in March 2014 to develop a plan of action to implement the agreed-upon suggestions, and to make further edits. Largely, this meant deciding on how to restructure each chapter and implement the necessary changes. This plan of action was presented to the Oslo Group and approved.

Manual Restructuring

Within the edits and suggestions proposed at the previous Oslo Group meeting, of particular note was Chapter 7 on energy indicators and greenhouse gas emissions. Since the ESCM is designed to illustrate how countries should implement the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES), this chapter was difficult to draft, as IRES did not provide any specific advice on these two topics, but merely showed the energy indicators as an important application of basic energy statistics. Thus it was proposed to delete this chapter from the manual, and include some basic discussions of energy indicators in the data dissemination chapter, while any important issues relating to how energy statistics impact greenhouse gas emissions estimates could be mentioned in the energy balances chapter, or again in the data dissemination text. The previous draft chapter, meanwhile, can now be used as a basis to guide the Oslo Group's future work on energy indicators.

Another important issue relating to restructuring was the content of Chapter 4 on data sources and data collection. The previous draft of the manual contained content that was better placed in other chapters, such as a comparison of energy statistics and energy accounts. In addition, the chapter covered essentially two independent topics, namely text on generic statistical processes and principles, and then energy-specific text on where to obtain energy data, and the methods to collect it. Therefore the chapter was divided into two new chapters along these lines, so that the generic statistics and energy-specific statistics sections will not impede each other's flow. The "new" chapter 4 takes the UNECE's Generic Statistical Business Process Model as a framework for the design, collection and dissemination of statistics, and the new chapter will also touch on

theoretical aspects of data quality that were previously included in Chapter 8. As a consequence, the "old" chapter 4 will now have a more practical character. It was recognised at previous meetings that this is one of the most crucial chapters in the manual, and being able to go into more detail on energy data sources, household surveys, modelling certain energy data and the uses of "big data" will improve the manual's effectiveness.

Manual finalisation

UNSD in coordination with the Oslo Group Secretariat (Statistics Canada) is now in a position to amalgamate these revised chapter texts into a single ESCM draft, which can then be further reviewed. However, during the meeting it was recognised that further country practices are needed in certain areas. In order to maintain the natural flow of the manual, short examples would be more appropriate, and these are now being sought by UNSD. Any countries with relevant contributions are strongly encouraged to send them to UNSD as soon as possible. In addition to brevity, examples concerning the uses of administrative data sources in energy statistics, the collection and/or estimation of solid biofuels, and the application of electronic data dissemination techniques would be of particular use to the manual.

The aim is to have this process finished before the next Oslo Group meeting.

The Worldwide Launch of the JODI Gas Database

The Joint Organisations Data Initiative's natural gas world database (JODI-Gas) was launched to the public at the 14th International Energy Forum Ministerial Meeting in Moscow in May 2014. This was the culmination of a process started by energy ministers calling for the extension of the JODI platform to cover natural gas in 2008, following the success of the JODI-Oil initiative. JODI-Gas aims to satisfy the need for better and more comprehensive gas data over both short- and long-term horizons. During the last two years, JODI partners have made significant progress in advancing JODI-Gas to its current standing: the database now features data for 77 countries which represent over 78% of global production and consumption.

The launching of the database did not happen out of nothing. JODI Gas is the result of years of hard work by hundreds of people around the globe who, by cooperating every single month, have endeavoured to enhance global natural gas statistics for the benefit of all actors.

Several pre-conditions were laid out by JODI partners before the database launch. One such pre-condition to the public launch was the completion of the JODI Gas Manual, which was published in February 2014. This manual was drafted by UNSD, with substantial input from the other JODI partners. Another pre-condition to launch was the organization of training workshops on JODI-Gas for statisticians from participating countries. UNSD was pleased to participate in both of these, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2013, and Baku, Azerbaijan in February 2014, together with colleagues from APEC, the IEA, OPEC and the IEF. These trainings provided an opportunity to present and use the manual for the first time, and countries provided welcome feedback. A third pre-condition to launch was the inclusion of data from more producing and consuming countries. In April 2014 the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) came on board as a JODI Partner. Together with the mentioned outreach and capacity building activities of all JODI partners, it is expected that this will further increase JODI-Gas' scope.

JODI-Gas is a commendable achievement, but it remains a work in progress. JODI partners continue to make efforts to improve the coverage and quality of the database and the completed JODI-Gas Manual provides a solid basis for this. With an established reference document, any differences in methodology can now be more easily flagged and described in metadata, increasing transparency to the users of the data.

If your country does not yet participate in either the JODI-Oil or JODI-Gas initiatives, then please contact UNSD for details on how to get involved.

Recent Meetings

A *Training for trainers on Energy Statistics and Balance in the Arab region* (9-13 March 2014, Muscat, Oman) was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) in cooperation with UNSD, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC

Stat) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to provide advanced training for trainers on energy statistics and balances in order to further continue the capacity building efforts at national level for experts working on energy statistics. The training was attended by 31 participants from 11 Arab countries representing National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Energy, Electricity and Petroleum.

The training covered concepts and methods for energy statistics provided by the United Nations' *International Recommendations for Energy Statistics* (IRES) and the activities that are currently being undertaken by UNSD together with the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics on the *Energy Statistics Compilers Manual* (ESCM). The training also covered specific sessions on oil, natural gas, renewable and electricity statistics, during which international questionnaires were presented and practical exercises were conducted. In addition, sessions on how to compile energy balances from the basic energy statistics; energy accounts, energy efficiency and the estimation of CO2 emissions were part of the programme.

Editorial Notes

The Energy Statistics newsletter is a bi-annual publication, prepared by the Industrial and Energy Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

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United Nations Statistics Division
Attn: Industrial and Energy Statistics Section
United Nations
New York, NY 10017, USA
E-mail address: energy_stat@un.org

or visit our website: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/energy.