

Joint OECD/UNECE Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange

Conclusions from the meeting in Geneva 8-9 March 2010

The Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) met on 8-9 March in Geneva. The purpose of the Expert Group is to promote the development of and use of SDMX standards and guidelines for data sharing within and between national and international statistical organisations. The Expert Group meetings also provide an important opportunity for participants to discuss and influence the development of SDMX standards, guidelines and tools.

The meeting was co-hosted by UNECE and OECD and covered the following main topics:

- Exchange of statistical data and metadata using SDMX between national and international statistical organisations.
- Update on technical standards, guidelines and tools
- SDMX implementations and plans between and within other organisations.

See [here](#) for full SDMX meeting agenda.

The meeting was attended by 106 participants from the SDMX sponsor group (UN, IMF, OECD, IMF, World Bank, BIS, Eurostat and ECB) and other national and international statistical organisations – this was up from 69 who attended the last Expert Group meeting in 2008. The main focus of the agenda was to report on the SDMX implementations and plans between and within other organisations.

SDMX Meeting conclusions

General

Although considerable activity was noted since the last Expert Group meeting held in 2008 there is still a lack of progress in national statistical organisations publishing data in SDMX. A goal of the meeting was to determine the reason for this and to agree a plan for moving forward.

The issue is Content not Technology

There was general agreement that the reason for the slow implementation of SDMX dissemination by National Statistical Agencies is content rather than technology: there are insufficient Data Structure Definitions (DSDs) to allow organizations to map their data to SDMX and the process to agree DSDs between organizations is extremely slow (UNESCO cited an example that it has taken 5 years to agree a DSD for Education). Work is required to accelerate this process among the various domain experts – it is not a task for the SDMX sponsors.

Extend Governance of SDMX

National statistical organisations requested that they be involved more in the governance and decision-making processes of SDMX. Their formal involvement is required in taking the standard forward. This could also increase the resource pool and availability of funds for future SDMX development work.

Senior management need to be convinced of benefits

Senior management in national statistical organisations need to be convinced of the business case for SDMX in order to promote its use within their own organizations. It was widely noted that this

was a key factor in the slow rate of implementation. This would lead to a change in perception on the use of SDMX within national statistical organisations and an emphasis in shift from data exchange to the benefits of using the SDMX model in the end-to-end business process. UNECE proposed organizing a seminar for Chief Statisticians at the next available opportunity.

International Organisations need to harmonise requirements

National statistical organisations requested that international organisations harmonised better their own requirements for DSDs.

Harmonise the DSD registry

There was a general request that existing DSDs defined across all the sponsor group organizations and national statistical organisations should be centralised in a registry and this made publicly available.

SDMX and the semantic web

Following the presentation of SDMX and the semantic web it was proposed that a version of SDMX for linked data (SDMX-RDF) be developed.

Sharing of SDMX tools

Participants should make others aware of SDMX tools by making them available in the online database, which will shortly be launched by the Bank for International Settlements, and linked to the SDMX web site.

Future Expert Group meetings

It was agreed that the Expert Group meeting will in future rotate between sponsor group and member country national statistical organisations.