

**OECD WORKSHOP ON BUSINESS AND CONSUMER TENDENCY SURVEYS, WARSAW, 14
SEPTEMBER 2004**

DRAFT WORKSHOP OUTCOMES AND FUTURE WORK

1. The OECD Workshop kindly hosted by the Warsaw School of Economics, brought together 50 delegates from government agencies and private institutes covering most regions of the world.

2. The primary Workshop objective was to progress work on priority tasks identified at the joint European Commission – OECD Workshop on International Development of Business Tendency Surveys (BTS) / Consumer Opinion Surveys (COS) held in Brussels in November 2003⁴. The outcomes and recommendations of this work will be discussed at a longer meeting scheduled for October - November 2005 (refer Section (d) below). The 2004 OECD Workshop comprised three substantive sessions. The first two sought feedback from delegates on initial OECD infrastructure development work on:

- a web portal for business tendency and consumer opinion surveys and statistics; and
- draft BTS / COS metadata standards.

The final session involved the creation of task forces and the firming up of their terms of references for work to be undertaken over the next 12 months in three priority areas: improvement of response rates, minimisation of respondent load; seasonal adjustment; and harmonisation of survey operation and technical design.

3. This draft report summarises the main meeting conclusions and outlines initial proposals for future work for consideration by participants at both the September 2004 OECD Workshop and the joint 2003 European Commission – OECD Workshop in Brussels. Comments and feedback are sought from all delegates **by Friday, 15 October 2004**. Following incorporation of any further input a detailed work program covering the next 12 months will be prepared by the OECD in cooperation with the European Commission and CIRET.

a. Draft BTS / COS web portal

4. During this session the OECD demonstrated a draft web portal (available at <http://www.oecd.org/std/bt-coi/coordination>) intended to promote harmonisation and facilitate best practice through sharing information about business tendency and consumer opinion surveys and statistics from these surveys between international organisations and statistical institutes. The portal provides a gateway to:

- existing and draft international guidelines and recommendations;
- questionnaires used by national institutes;
- summary metadata describing key elements of national surveys;
- selected country data and regional aggregates presented in a common format;
- papers and relevant meetings organised by the OECD, the European Commission and CIRET;
- selected best practice;
- selected websites;
- terminology.

5. The portal presents a structured overview or template of BTS / COS and is a resource for agencies either currently running surveys in these fields or intending to develop such surveys. Once established, the template will be populated with information and links over time. A further aim of the

portal is to provide a link to experience / standards to relevant quantitative statistics, in particular, with regard to terminology, best practice on issues of survey operations and data and metadata exchange.

6. There was strong support at the Workshop for the portal and delegates believed that it would be a useful resource by facilitating ready access to the issues / information outlined above. Discussion at the meeting centred on the feasibility of maintaining the portal and in this regard there was also strong support for the OECD, European Commission and CIRET to work together to avoid duplication of effort with respect to the portal and the content of their respective websites. All three international organisations at the Workshop agreed to cooperate in this area. One suggestion involved exploring the possibility of segmenting the portal in a way that each respective international organisation would assume responsibility of maintaining one or more individual segments. The OECD agreed to pursue this approach with the Commission and CIRET. Other suggestions raised during the discussion entailed:

- reviewing the initial structure of the portal to make it more intuitive. In particular, there is a perceived need to give more visibility to access to data and metadata, both in a standardised format (though there is a need to identify process for agreeing on a common presentation format) and through links to the web pages of individual national institutes. Available data could also be formatted by sector;
- providing access to long-time series for which there was a strong demand by analysts. Such users also sought access to detailed data which in many instances is not collected by international organisations. Long time series for key aggregates could be located on an international organisation database in a standard format or by link to national institute websites depending on the dissemination policy of individual organisations. Access to detailed aggregates could also be made available through such national links;
- providing as much information as possible in a common language such as English. However, delegates also stressed the need for questionnaires to be available in national languages. In recognition of the cost of translating information into a common language, the availability of information such as metadata in national language was considered far more preferable than not making available any information;
- maintaining a list of relevant national institute websites and contacts. Where possible links to specific relevant web pages should be provided rather than just the home page.

7. Finally, there was strong support for the portal to go “live” as soon as possible, following the incorporation of suggestions made by delegates attending the Workshop. The initial design and content of the portal would subsequently evolve over time as new issues, etc, emerged.

b. Draft metadata standards

8. This session presented draft BTS / COS metadata¹ standards which comprised:

- a small set of recommended good practice for the compilation and dissemination of metadata;
- recommendations on the use of standardised terminology and definitions both for terms specific to BTS / COS and for terms in common with quantitative statistics;

¹ The International Standards Organisation (ISO) definition of metadata is “data that defines and describes other data”. Metadata in the context of the Workshop paper is more akin to the term statistical metadata defined by the United Nations Statistical Commission as “..... Information on data – and about processes for producing and using data. Metadata describe statistical data and – to some extent – processes and tools involved in the production and usage of data.

- a preliminary list of common metadata items (refer Annex to this report).

9. The standards presented at the Workshop generally align with existing standards where they exist or with standards currently being developed. Most of these standards have been, or are being, developed for quantitative statistics, though in the main they are also relevant for BTS / COS statistics. The Workshop was an opportunity to identify and insert any aspects specific to qualitative statistics into metadata standards currently being developed².

10. In summary, recommended good practice for the compilation and dissemination of metadata require statistical agencies compiling BTS /COS statistics to:

- compile metadata that will enable users to understand the strengths and limitations of survey data and to assess the relevance of the data to their particular needs;
- ensure that users have ready access to metadata through its dissemination via a range of different media, in particular, on the internet. Ideally, metadata on the web should be available free of charge even if the actual statistics they describe are subject to an organisation's price regime;
- keep their metadata up to date and incorporate changes in definitions, classifications and methodology;
- adopt good practice for ensuring the stability of URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) or provide links between old and new URLs that will redirect users to the new address³;
- provide contact information (email address, etc) where further information about concepts, definitions and statistical methodology may be obtained.

11. With regards to the adoption of common terminology, the paper presented at the Workshop recommended, as a starting point, the terms specific to BTS / COS contained in the glossary of the OECD publication, *Business Tendency Surveys: A Handbook* (available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/61/31837055.pdf>) and the terms and definitions describing different metadata items contained in the Metadata Common Vocabulary (MCV) developed within the SDMX initiative (refer footnote 2).

12. Following discussion of proposals for metadata standards at the Workshop the OECD undertook to:

- place them as preliminary standards on the portal, and invite further comment by a specified date;
- map the content of existing lists of metadata items for BTS / COS (e.g. in the OECD Handbook, and in the recent European Commission request for metadata) in order to identify and resolve any inconsistencies. This exercise and subsequent proposals would also take account of the capacity of smaller institutes to provide metadata to international organisations. Similarly, there is also the

² In the main such standards are being developed by Eurostat, IMF and the OECD through the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative (refer <http://www.SDMX.org>) and by the UNECE, Eurostat, OECD METIS forum).

³ The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) document "Cool URLs don't change" outlines good practice for maintaining URL. Available at <http://www.w3.org/Provider/Style/URI>.

need to allow for the provision of metadata in stages over time, rather than all at once. Finally, there is also a need to ensure consistency with metadata standards being developed for quantitative statistics.

c. Creation of task forces to work on priority tasks

13. For this session the OECD presented initial terms of reference for three task forces proposed to be created to undertake work over the next twelve months on the three priority areas identified at the joint Workshop in Brussels in November 2003:

- improvement of response rates, minimisation of respondent load;
- seasonal adjustment of survey data;
- harmonisation of survey operation and technical design.

14. There was strong support for the creation of these task forces and several suggestions for improvement to the terms of reference for each were made at the meeting. The list below shows those countries who indicated at the Workshop in Warsaw their willingness to be involved in the work of each task force. In response to this report, institutes are requested to confirm their commitment and forward the names and contact details of their nominated representatives for the taskforces to the OECD as soon as possible. Countries not listed below are also invited to join a taskforce and nominate their representative(s), in particular, those who were not present at the Workshop in Warsaw but had indicated their interest in feedback to the previous report of the 2003 Workshop in Brussels.

- Improvement of response rates, minimisation of respondent load

Austria, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, Sweden, South Africa, United States, European Commission, OECD

- Seasonal adjustment of survey data

Poland, European Commission, OECD

- Harmonisation of survey operation and technical design

Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, European Commission, OECD

15. In order to facilitate the commencement of work by these task forces the OECD will disseminate revised terms of reference based on the outcomes of the Workshop in Warsaw to nominated institute representatives together with a draft work program for further comment in order to finalise planning for each task force. The OECD will also contact some organisations to assess their willingness to lead a task force (or specific aspects of task force work), outlining at the same time the support the Organisation would be able to provide in this process.

d. Proposed 2005 joint European Commission – OECD Workshop

16. It is envisaged that a joint European Commission – OECD BTS / COS Workshop will be held over a two day period in Brussels at the end of October or beginning of November 2005. This meeting will be held back-to-back with the Commission's Workshop of EU countries. The focus of the joint 2005

Workshop will be presentation of the reports and recommendations of task forces together with presentations by national institutes on relevant recent experience on any of the task force topics.

e. OECD contact for further information

17. Please do not hesitate to contact Denis Ward (denis.ward@oecd.org) if you require further information or clarification about any issue outlined above.

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20 September 2004

**METADATA STANDARDS FOR BUSINESS TENDENCY AND CONSUMER OPINION SURVEYS - PRELIMINARY
LIST OF COMMON METADATA ITEMS**

<u>Top level¹</u>	<u>Child level¹</u>
Source	<u>Contact person and organisation</u>
	<u>Types of Data sources used (household, estab/enterprise survey)</u>
	<u>Name of collection / source used</u>
	<u>Source periodicity</u>
	<u>Date input last received from source</u>
Data characteristics and collection	<u>Unit of measure used</u>
	<u>Power code</u>
	<u>Variables collected</u>
	<u>Sampling</u>
	<u>Reporting unit</u>
	<u>Periodicity</u>
	<u>Reference period</u>
	<u>Base period</u>
	<u>Date last updated</u>
	<u>Non-response</u>
	<u>Link to Release calendar</u>
	<u>Contact person</u>
	<u>Other data characteristics and collection</u>
<u>Statistical population and scope of the data</u>	<u>Statistical population</u>
	<u>Geographic coverage</u>
	<u>Sector coverage</u>
	<u>Institutional coverage</u>
	<u>Item coverage</u>
	<u>Population coverage</u>
	<u>Product coverage</u>
	<u>Other coverage</u>
<u>Statistical concepts and classifications used</u>	<u>Key statistical concepts used</u>
	<u>Classification(s) used</u>
Manipulation and dissemination	<u>Aggregation & consolidation.</u>
	<u>Estimation</u>
	<u>Imputation</u>
	<u>Transformations</u>
	<u>Validation</u>
	<u>Index type</u>
	<u>Weights</u>
	<u>Seasonal adjustment</u>
	<u>Other manipulation & adjustments</u>
<u>Dissemination format(s)</u>	
Other aspects	<u>Recommended uses and limitations</u>
	<u>Quality comments</u>
	<u>Other comments</u>

1. Top and Child level headings underlined equate with those currently proposed for use by IMF and Eurostat in their metadata dissemination models.

2. A further elaboration of this list allows possible differentiation between information on departures from existing international guidelines and recommendations and information on series breaks, and information that only describes current concepts and practices.

3. Definitions and further information about each of the metadata items listed above are available at