

Methodological Research

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Accounting Frameworks for Sustainable Development

Purpose

To provide policy makers with new statistical tools for evaluating sustainability of economic, environmental and social policies, in particular, with reference to trade-offs between alternative policies.

Objectives and outputs

Significant statistical work on sustainable development is now being carried out in many international and national settings. The OECD has been carrying out a horizontal project addressing the issue from various perspectives, included the development of indicators for peer reviews and for evaluating trends in specific domains.

The objective of this project is to develop new accounting frameworks to evaluate inter-relationships between economic, social and environmental policies. In particular, the project should evaluate the possibility of integrating already existing accounting frameworks (i.e. input-output models, social accounting matrices and environmental accounts) in a coherent vision, developing new tools to identify trade-offs between various policies with respect to the target of sustainability.

Specific recommendations should be issued on the basis of the experiences already done or currently carried out in some OECD countries.

The project will be continued in 2004-2005 if OECD countries decide to extend the mandate to the Secretariat on Sustainable Development, which expires in May 2004.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

A workshop will be organised in 2004, in co-operation with other international organisations and under the umbrella of a Steering Group of the Conference of European Statisticians.

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Handbook on Economic Globalisation Indicators

Purpose

To develop guidelines and recommendations for the development of reference indicators that describe economic globalisation.

Objectives and outputs

The initial version of this handbook will cover four areas: foreign direct investment; activities of multinational enterprises; technology and trade.

It is expected that a final version of this manual will be produced in 2004. Because the subject is wide ranging, an extensive review process by many different groups will be required before its release.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

Release of the first version of the Manual.

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Handbook on Useful Practices for Constructing Composite Indicators

Purpose

Produce a handbook to guide both users and developer through the pros and cons of composite indicators. For users, the handbook will provide a list of critical questions users have to ask in order to judge the quality of a composite indicator. For developers, the handbook will illustrate and explain the necessary steps needed to construct high-quality composite indicators. This includes, for example, testing for robustness.

Objectives and outputs

The joint project between the OECD and the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) began with a workshop in Ispra in May 2003 (see http://webfarm.jrc.cec.eu.int/uasa/events/oecd_12may03/ for presentations and conclusions). Based on the conclusions at Ispra emerged the idea for the handbook.

The next activity is a joint OECD-JRC workshop, which will be held in Paris (February 2004). Based on the conclusions of the workshop OECD and JRC will write a first draft of the handbook, which will be ready in June 2004. This draft will be circulated widely for comments based on which the final report will be prepared.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

New activity

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Key Indicators for Assessing National Performances

Purpose

To catalyse, sustain and promote a global community of practice – involving both professionals and leadership from multiple sectors and multiple disciplines – on how to develop indicator systems for democratic political units (from communities to regions, and from countries to the world) on major areas of interest (economy, society, environment, etc.).

Objectives and outputs

Users' needs of looking at economic, social and environmental phenomena from a "horizontal" perspective is becoming more and more evident, both at national and international levels. Policy makers and civil society, in particular, are demanding integrated views of various phenomena to make decisions and to evaluate the overall situation of a country, a region, or a local community. To address these issues, several OECD countries, as well as the European Union, have undertaken specific actions to develop sets of statistics (especially indicators) for measuring the "national progress".

These initiatives have been developed with a limited exposure to the international debate. Therefore, the OECD has decided to establish an initiative to promote the international debate on these issues, to help OECD member countries, as well as non-members, to develop indicator systems for monitoring economic, social and environmental developments.

The first "OECD Forum on Key Indicators" will be organised in October 2004 as kick-off event of a medium-term initiative in this field.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

The first Forum will be organised in the Autumn 2004. Preparatory documents will be available before the event, while a volume with proceedings is scheduled in 2005.

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Manual on Data and Metadata Presentation

Purpose

To compile a manual containing international recommendations and guidelines on the presentation of data and metadata in various dissemination media, including the Internet.

Objectives and outputs

The major areas of real difference in the comparability of data produced by various international organisations and national statistical agencies are: conceptual differences arising from the use of different variable definitions, units and classifications; and operational differences flowing out of differences in data collection and processing practices. However, even where differences from these factors are minimal, data disseminated by different countries, etc., may actually look different because of the use of different data presentation practices.

The proposed manual will bring together guidelines and best practice on data presentation from existing international standards and draft new standards as appropriate into the one single document. The presentation issues to be included in the manual include those relating to: different types of data (absolute figures, indices, growth rates) and different forms of data (non-seasonally adjusted, seasonally adjusted, trend cycle).

It will also provide recommendations on a number of key data presentation practices that also have a significant impact on data consistency. These comprise: data revision practices, presentation of series breaks, data citation practices, presentation of information on sampling and non-sampling errors, presentation of metadata.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

The OECD has undertaken some initial work on the preparation of a draft document containing an initial set of data and metadata presentation guidelines and recommended good practice in key areas. Work will continue over the next 12 months and will incorporate UN Committee for the Co-ordination of Statistical Activity (CCSA) suggestions on the issues to be covered by the manual and other input from CCSA members, together with guidance provided by the UN Statistical Commission. The release of the manual is foreseen for 2005.

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OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms

Purpose

To provide a highly visible and readily accessible source of definitional information that are derived from international standards for use by OECD author areas in the development of questionnaires and other data collection instruments and for inclusion in published output. To set target definitions based on existing international statistical standards that will ultimately be linked to data located in the OECD's corporate data environment and to be the catalyst for the development of consistent international statistical standards by highlighting existing inconsistencies between existing standards.

Objectives and outputs

The OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms contains a comprehensive set of definitions of the main data items collected by the Organisation. The Glossary also contains definitions of key terminology and concepts and commonly used acronyms. Around 6 000 definitions currently included in the glossary are primarily drawn from existing international statistical guidelines and recommendations that have been prepared over the last two or three decades by international organisations such as the OECD, IMF, ILO, Eurostat, United Nations working with national statistical institutes.

Work in 2003 entailed the addition of new definitions prepared by a number of OECD statistical working parties and expert groups, as well as definitions published by other international organisations, and the insertion of extensive information into the "context" field of the glossary, explaining the uses and limitations of many of the definitions included.

Publications

OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms

Databases

OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

Preparation of a CD-ROM edition of the OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms.

Insertion of new definitions reflecting the continuing activities of various expert groups and working parties both within the OECD and other international organisations, linking key definitions to data in the OECD.Stat and Metastore environment.

Dissemination:

At the moment the Glossary is only available for free distribution on the OECD website. In 2004 a CD-ROM version of the Glossary will be produced

Methodological Research

Official Statistics for E-government Policies

Purpose

To evaluate the official statistics that can support and facilitate the design and the implementation of e-government policies at national level.

Objectives and outputs

Almost all OECD countries launched e-government strategies to innovate the way in which public administrations work and provide services to citizens. Statistics can play a fundamental role in providing guidance and support to the design and implementation of such strategies. Areas in which statistics are relevant are: dissemination of information about facts and trends in the economy, the environment and the society; exchange of data among public administrations based on common metadata; compilation of statistics based on administrative sources; protection of confidentiality.

The main objective of the initiative is to identify recommendations in this area based on good practices already existing in OECD countries.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

A workshop (originally planned in 2003) will be organised to compare current practices and strategic plans identified in OECD countries, from which recommendations will be prepared.

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Statistical Classifications

Purpose

To contribute to more relevant, useful international economic and social classifications for use in OECD member countries and elsewhere. To encourage greater convergence of regional and national activity as well as product and trade classifications in OECD member countries. To coordinate OECD input into the revision of international classifications that are actively used in OECD.

Objectives and outputs

Specifically to contribute to the development of 2007 revisions of ISIC, CPC and a subsequent revision of EBOPS.

Main Developments for 2004

General aspects:

OECD (virtual) sub-group of Statistical Policy Group (SPG) was established to co-ordinate OECD inputs to UN Expert Group on Social and Economic Classifications and to other guardians of International Classifications