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**OECD Short-Term Economic Statistics Expert Group**

**Short-term Economic Statistics Expert Group (STESEG):  
Task Force on Data Presentation and Seasonal Adjustment**

**Summary information on STESEG task force work on data presentation and seasonal adjustment since the beginning of 2003**

**28-30 June 2004  
Room C  
Château de la Muette, starting at 9:30 a.m. on the first day**

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*Submitted to the Expert Group under item 3 of the draft agenda*

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**English - Or. English**

## DATA PRESENTATION AND SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

### a. Executive summary

1. This brief paper provides background information on STESEG task force work on data presentation and seasonal adjustment. It also describes recent OECD work with regard to the preparation of a Manual on data and metadata reporting and presentation that is broader in scope on presentation issues than the work of the STESEG task force but which directly incorporates the work of the task force.

2. The paper then lists the four documents on data presentation disseminated to STESEG delegates at the end of April 2004. The OECD seeks written comment on these by 10 June 2004. In particular, STESEG delegates are invited to comment on the issues outlined below for these documents, together with any other points/issues they feel appropriate. The documents (and comments) will be discussed at the STESEG meeting on 28-30 June 2004.

*For the three task force papers on standard terminology, growth rates and seasonal adjustment STESEG Members are invited to:*

- Provide comment on any aspect of the background material contained in the papers and in particular comment on any of the specific proposals or recommendations.
- Present their views on a small number of specific issues where the task force outlined a range of options/opinions or sought further input from STESEG. These issues comprise:
  - Justification and recommendations regarding the presentation of annualised growth rates outlined on pages 6-9 in the paper on “Presentation of seasonally adjusted series”;
  - Your views and opinions on the discussion on the common practice of presenting year-on-year growth rates on seasonally adjusted series presented in para. 5 on page 1 of the paper “Task Force Recommendations for the Presentation of Growth Rates”.

*For the “Draft Data and Metadata Reporting and Presentation Manual” STESEG members are particularly invited to:*

- Provide comment on the intended content of the proposed manual and identification of data and metadata reporting and to specify issues not currently included particularly those relating to annual statistics and/or social statistics.
- Identify any specific relevant reference material on reporting and presentation issues prepared by either national agencies or international organisations which you believe would be of use in the preparation of the manual.

## b. Background

3. STESEG work on data presentation and seasonal adjustment flowed out of the 2002 meeting of the Group. The main areas identified by STESEG regarding presentation that would benefit from future work by the Group concerned the :

- identification of the different methods for estimation and presentation of growth rates and the preparation of recommendations for best practice and transparency;
- time series length and the adoption of best practice for the presentation/explanation of series breaks in disseminated output.

4. With regard to seasonal adjustment the main areas of future work were:

- recommendations on best practice for the dissemination of seasonal adjustment procedures for the benefit of external users; and
- formulation of recommendations on the presentation of data including raw data, seasonally adjusted data and trend estimates.

5. At the 2003 STESEG the task force on data presentation and seasonal adjustment<sup>1</sup> presented their initial work in papers on eight presentation issues<sup>2</sup>. These comprised:

- a list of standard terminologies and definitions related to data presentation;
- an outline of the different forms of growth rates;
- the different types of data revisions and the identification of good practice;
- presentation of sampling error estimates;
- presentation of filtered series;
- presentation of historical retrospective data;
- presentation of seasonally adjusted data;
- relating certain series to similar but not identical series.

6. Following the 2003 meeting the task force focused their efforts on three issues in this list, namely: standard terminologies; definition and recommended best practice for the presentation of growth rates; and the presentation of seasonally adjusted data. The remaining presentation issues in the list would be incorporated in a broad manual on data and metadata reporting and presentation that was proposed by the OECD at around the same time (refer para. 11 below).

<sup>1</sup> Membership of the task force comprised: Gian Paolo Oneto (ISTAT (Chair)); Marc Debusschere (Statistics Belgium); Segismundo Fassler (IMF); Adrien Friez (INSEE); Monique Graf (Swiss Federal Statistics Office); Sandra Jung (Statistisches Bundesamt Germany); Robert Kirchner (German Bundesbank); Bernard Lefrancois (Statistics Canada); Catherine Mamay (Statistics Canada); Roberto Sabbatini (Bank of Italy).

<sup>2</sup> Refer paper "Overview and Summary of the Activity of the Task Force on Data Presentation and Seasonal Adjustment" presented at the 2003 STESEG meeting. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/60/2789033.pdf>. All of the papers presented on the eight issues are available on the STESEG website at [http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33715\\_2493702\\_119808\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,2340,en_2649_33715_2493702_119808_1_1_1,00.html)

**c. Data and Metadata Reporting and Presentation Manual**

7. In September 2003 the Committee for the Co-ordination of Statistical Activities<sup>3</sup> (CCSA) discussed a document prepared by the OECD outlining draft proposals for the preparation of a manual outlining guidelines and recommended best practice for the reporting and presentation of statistical data and metadata disseminated by national agencies and international organisations on various dissemination media. The CCSA welcomed OECD proposals for the preparation of such a manual and requested the Organisation to prepare a submission on the proposal for discussion at the March 2004 United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC).

8. The proposed Manual presented at the UNSC (which was subsequently modified following receipt of feedback from NSIs attending the Commission) drew a clear distinction between data presentation standards involving table layout, font, type faces, readability, graphical presentation, etc, used by both international organisations and national agencies<sup>4</sup> and standards for the reporting of data by national agencies to international organisations. The Manual will also highlight the relationship between data and metadata reporting standards included and current related international initiatives such as Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), National Accounts World Wide Exchange (NAWWE), and work by international organisations to formulate common data needs for various statistical domains.

9. Although the Manual touches on issues of presentation, its main focus will be standards for data reporting. It will provide a small number of specific recommendations covering the two broad dimensions in which all data may be reported, namely: types of data (absolute figures, indices, growth rates, ratios); and form of data (raw, working day adjusted, seasonally adjusted, trend-cycle). The Manual will also emphasise the need for national agencies and international organisations to prepare adequate metadata describing concepts, collection and processing practices as well as reporting and presentation practices. Recommendations here will pick up on previous work (and work to be undertaken over the next 12 months) undertaken by METIS.

10. In addition, there are a small number of key data reporting practices that also have a significant impact on data interpretability where different approaches currently used by national and international agencies complicate comparisons of national data. These include different:

- data revision presentation practices;
- reporting practices for the presentation of series breaks;
- practices for the reporting of sampling and non-sampling errors;
- base years in the presentation of indices;
- citation practices.

11. The Manual will outline key recommendations and/or good practice with regard to these. The range of reporting practices outlined in an initial version of the Manual could be expanded in subsequent versions to allow for subsequent revision and to cover emerging issues. The preparation of Manual entails

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<sup>3</sup> Comprising representatives from all the international organisations involved in the collection and dissemination of statistics.

<sup>4</sup> These are typically contained in publication manuals for internal use by authors in national agencies and international organisations.

direct use of much of the text from papers presented for discussion at the STESEG meeting in June 2003 and from the task force papers to be discussed by the Group in June 2004.

12. Because of the strong relationship between the work of STESEG over the last two years on data presentation issues and the scope of the Manual, a “first” draft of the Manual is being disseminated to attendees at the June 2004 meeting for comment and discussion. Following incorporation into the Manual of comments and suggestions from STESEG there will be subsequent consultation with other countries and international organisations (the latter in the context of the CCSA in September 2004). A revised version of the Manual will also be presented at the UNSC in March 2005.

**d. Documents on data presentation, etc, disseminated for discussion and comment at the 2004 meeting of STESEG**

13. The following four documents on data presentation and reporting have been disseminated to STESEG for written comment by 10 June and discussion at the meeting on 28-30 June 2004. These comprise:

- three task force papers:

- Task force proposals for standard terminology relating to data presentation;
- Task force recommendations for the presentation of growth rates;
- Presentation of seasonally adjusted series.

- the “Draft Data and Metadata Reporting and Presentation Manual”.

STESEG delegates are invited to comment on the issues outlined for these documents in the Executive Summary (in Part a) for this paper, together with any other points/issues they feel appropriate.