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Eighth meeting of the Executive Committee of the
Statistical Conference of the Americas of the
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Santo Domingo, 22 to 24 October 2008

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON
THE DISSEMINATION OF THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF PRACTICE
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ***

* This report was prepared by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).



A. BACKGROUND

The fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) welcomed the initiative by a number of countries to take action in the region to promote awareness and use of the European Statistics Code of Practice, bearing in mind the situation in each country, and requested the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and ECLAC to prepare a programme of action to implement this initiative.¹ The aim of the initiative is to establish a frame of reference for good statistical practices that are considered appropriate for the Latin American and Caribbean region and to encourage its adoption, especially in terms of the institutional and organizational environment of national statistical offices, in accordance with the specific reality of each country, on the basis of the following principles: professional independence, mandate for data collection, adequacy of resources, quality commitment, statistical confidentiality, impartiality and objectivity.² The seventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC took note of the joint report prepared by EUROSTAT and ECLAC and approved the proposed programme of work, which consists in:

- (a) Creation of a task force made up of experts from countries interested in participating in this activity;
- (b) Preparation of a self-evaluation questionnaire for the countries on principles 1 to 6 of the European Statistics Code of Practice, indicators and their application;
- (c) Preparation of a document for participating countries on the results of the questionnaire on the application of the principles, in which the strengths and weaknesses are identified;
- (d) Organization of a workshop relating to the application of the principles on institutional factors with a view to analysing the European experience and discussing the results of the self-evaluation exercise. The workshop is intended for the task force, European countries proposed by EUROSTAT and members of the Conference that express an interest in participating;
- (e) Preparation of a support project for the implementation of best practices in the area of institutional factors in countries that wish to receive technical assistance in this field from experts from the European Union, ECLAC and member countries of the Conference;
- (f) Raising funds to finance the above-mentioned programme;
- (g) Discussion and approval of the proposed programme of work at the fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

¹ See the *Report of the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/L.2795), Santiago, Chile, 9 October 2007.

² Principles 1 to 6, Implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice. Document prepared for the seminar *Institution-Building in National Statistical Offices: Credibility and Autonomy* (DDR/8), 12 July 2008. See also the Report of the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (LC/L.2870), 28 February 2008.

To date, items (a) and (b) of the programme have already been implemented and item (c) is currently being implemented. A working group was set up with representatives from Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, EUROSTAT and ECLAC, and its main task was to examine the questionnaire used in European Union countries to assess the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice and produce a version suited to the situation of Latin American and Caribbean countries. That version of the questionnaire is attached to the present report as an annex.

The next phase was the self-assessment questionnaire and the drafting of a report on the results of applying the principles, in which the strengths and weaknesses in each area analysed are identified. The working group considered that, before moving on to the self-assessment questionnaire in all countries, it was necessary to carry out a pilot experiment in selected countries to identify any possible difficulties they might have in replying to the questions. The following countries were asked to take part in the pilot experiment: Colombia, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. The results of the experiment will be used to produce a new version of the questionnaire, which the countries of the region will be asked to complete for the purposes of self-assessment. EUROSTAT and ECLAC will present an oral progress report on the pilot experiment to the Executive Committee.

**B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICES ABOUT
THEIR INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT**
(June 2008)

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out the state of the institutional environment in which **national statistical offices** carry out their activities. This initiative is in response to the mandate issued at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC to promote regional knowledge and debate on the adaptation of the European Statistics Code of Practice to the situation of each country.

IDENTIFICATION:

- 1) Country:
- 2) Name of institution:
- 3) Person responsible for providing information:
- 4) Address:
- 5) Telephone:
- 6) E-mail:
- 7) Date:

Choose **one reply** only for each question, except those where several responses are possible. When a question states “please specify”, try to be brief and precise.

PRINCIPLE 1: PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE

The professional independence of statistical authorities from other government, regulatory and administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of a country's official statistics.

Indicator 1.1: The independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in producing and disseminating official statistics is specified in law.

1. Does the legislation in your country provide for the independence of the statistical authority from political and other external interference in the production and dissemination of official statistics?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 1.2: The status of the head of the statistical authority is such that he or she has access to high-ranking government authorities and public administrative bodies. He/she must be a person of the highest professional calibre.

2. Is the status of the head of the statistical office comparable to that of:

(a) a minister
(or senior political position)?

(b) a high-ranking (non-political)
civil servant?

(c) another authority?

Please specify:

3. The head of the statistical authority is appointed by:

(a) the President/Prime Minister

(b) the President/Prime Minister
with the agreement of
Congress/Parliament

(c) another authority

Please specify:

4. Is the head of the statistical authority appointed on the basis of a public competition?

(a) YES (b) NO

5. Is the head of the statistical authority appointed under a fixed-term contract?

(a) YES (b) NO

6. If so, is the contract renewable?

(a) YES (b) NO

7. If so, have the last three heads of the statistical authority completed their terms of office as stipulated in their contract?

(a) YES (b) NO

8. If not, please specify below.

9. Are the procedures for termination of the contract of the head of the statistical authority set out in legislation and/or regulations?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 1.3: The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have responsibility for ensuring that official statistics are produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

Indicator 1.4: The head of the statistical authority and, where appropriate, the heads of its statistical bodies have sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

10. Is the content of statistical press releases subject to ministerial approval?

(a) Always (b) Sometimes (c) Never

11. Is the timing of statistical press releases subject to ministerial approval?

(a) Always (b) Sometimes (c) Never

12. Is the choice of statistical methods, standards and procedures subject to ministerial approval?

(a) Always (b) Sometimes (c) Never

Indicator 1.5: The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

13. Does your organisation have a statistical work programme?

(a) YES (b) NO

14. If so, is the statistical work programme made public?

(a) YES (b) NO

15. Is the progress report on the statistical work programme made public?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 1.6: Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from statements or interpretations by government authorities relating to published statistics.

16. Are statistical releases (that is, press releases, reports or others) clearly identified as outputs of the statistical authority

(a) YES (b) NO
[Skip to question 18]

17. If so, how can statistical products be recognised?

(a) Logo (b) Design (b) Copyright (c) Other

Please specify:

18. Are statistical releases issued separately from political statements or interpretations by government authorities relating to published statistics?

(a) Always (b) Sometimes (c) Never

Indicator 1.7: The statistical authority, when appropriate, comments publicly on statistical matters, including criticisms and misuses of official statistics.

19. As the statistical authority, is it your specific policy to intervene publicly on statistical issues, in cases of:

a) Criticism of official statistics: YES NO

b) Misuses of official statistics: YES NO

c) Misinterpretation of official statistics: YES NO

20. If so, please state briefly the policy:

PRINCIPLE 2: MANDATE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Statistical authorities must have a clear legal mandate to collect information for statistical purposes. At the request of these authorities, administrations, enterprises, households, and the public at large may be bound by law to permit access to or deliver data for statistical purposes.

Indicator 2.1: The mandate to collect information for the production and dissemination of official statistics is established by law.

21. Is the mandate to collect information for the production and dissemination of official statistics established by law?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 2.2: The statistical authority is permitted under national legislation to use administrative records for statistical purposes.

22. Is the statistical authority permitted to use fiscal sources for statistical purposes?

(a) YES (b) YES, sometimes (c) Never

23. If the response is (a) or (b), state whether access to the data is regulated by:

- (a) Legislation (b) Other forms of agreement

24. Is the statistical authority permitted to use other administrative sources?

- ((a) YES (b) YES, Sometimes (c) Never

25. If so, are the ministries and institutions authorized to provide data on the basis of specific legislation?

- (a) YES (b) YES, Sometimes (c) Never

26. If the response is (a) or (b), state whether access to data is regulated by:

- (a) Legislation (b) Other forms of agreement

Indicator 2.3: Responding to statistical surveys issued by the statistical authority is compulsory under the law.

27. Does the relevant legislation of your country make it compulsory to respond to statistical surveys?

- (a) YES, for all surveys (b) YES, for some surveys (c) NO
[Skip to question 35]

28. If the response is (b), which types of reporting units (entities) are included?

- (a) All enterprises (b) Some enterprises (b) Households only (c) Other reporting units

Please specify:

29. In case households reject the obligation to respond to a survey, is there a system of sanctions in place?

- (a) YES (b) NO
[Skip to question 32]

30. If so, how often do you make use of it?

- (a) Always

 (b) Sometimes

 (c) Never

31. If the sanction contemplated is a fine, state its value in United States dollars:

32. In case enterprises reject the obligation to respond to a survey, is there a system of sanctions in place?

- (a) YES (b) NO

33. If so, how often do you use it?

- (a) Always

 (b) Sometimes

 (c) Never

34. If the sanction contemplated is a fine, state its value in United States dollars:

PRINCIPLE 3: ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

The resources available to statistical authorities must be sufficient to meet the country's official statistical requirements.

Indicator 3.1: Human, financial, and computing resources are sufficient and of a sufficiently high quality to meet the country's current statistical needs.

35. Please provide the following information for 2007 or for the last year for which data are available.

Note: States with decentralized statistical systems are required to provide data for the national statistical office and, if available, aggregate national data.

36. Total staff (excluding field staff/interviewers) in full-time equivalents:

37. Total staff includes: (a) Regular staff: (b) Short-term contract staff:

38. Total annual budget (including administrative costs) in United States dollars

39. Total annual budget (including administrative costs):

(a) per 100,000 inhabitants (in United States dollars)

(b) as a percentage of GDP

40. In comparison with 2002, your total budget for 2007, in real terms (that is, with adjustments for inflation, specific occurrences or special tasks in a given year), is:

(a) practically the same level

(b) higher

(c) lower

Note: If information is not available for 2007, please choose the closest possible year.

41. Is your institution free to manage its own budget once it has been approved by the competent national authorities?

(a) YES

(b) YES, to a limited degree

(c) NO

42. To what extent are your resources adequate for meeting current national statistical needs? Please indicate on a scale from **1 (= fully adequate)** to **5 (= totally inadequate)**.

	1	2	3	4	5
(a) Number of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Quality of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Amount of financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Amount of computing resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Quality of computing resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PRINCIPLE 4: QUALITY COMMITMENT

All members of the national statistical system pledge to work and cooperate in accordance with the principles relating to the established quality system.

43. Has your organization introduced a total quality management (TQM) or similar system?

(a) YES (b) NO

[Skip to question 46]

44. If not, are there plans to set up a total quality management system?

(a) YES (b) NO

[Skip to question 46]

45. If your organization plans to set up such a system, please indicate the time frame:
46. Does your organization have a strategic plan or a long-term (that is, a five-year) plan?
 (a) YES (b) NO
47. Does your organization have a unit in charge of quality management?
 (a) YES (b) NO
 [Skip to question 49]
48. If so, what kind of unit or organization is it?

- (a) Unit or department
- (b) Quality manager
- (c) Other reporting units

Please specify:

49. Does your organization promote internally the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics?
 (a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 4.1: Product quality is regularly monitored in accordance with quality components.

Indicator 4.2: Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics.

Indicators 4.1 and 4.2 also refer to "Accessibility and Clarity" (Principle 15):

50. For how many of your statistical outputs do you regularly monitor quality in accordance with the components of the quality system established within your institution?
 (a) >75% (b) 75-50% (c) 49-25% (d) < 25% (e) 0%
 [Skip to question 53]

51. Where do you disseminate the results of this monitoring?
 (a) Internally (b) Externally (c) Both (c) Nowhere
52. Are the results made available to senior management for action?
 (a) YES (b) NO

53. Do you regularly monitor the quality of the stages in the statistical production process?

	NO	YES	YES, for most operations	YES, for some operations	If the response is YES with what frequency?
(a) Planning surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(b) Survey design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(c) Data collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(d) Data capture and processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(e) Data analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(f) Data dissemination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

54. In the affirmative, which procedures and/or methods do you use?

- (a) Internal audit
- (b) Self-assessment
- (c) Quality reports
- (d) Quality indicators (measurement of process variables)
- (e) Others

Please specify:

55. Do you encourage users to make comments on the content and presentation of your statistical products?

- (a) YES (b) NO

56. If so, please indicate the methods used to obtain users' views and comments.

57. What percentage of your statistical outputs are available via Internet (including all types of outputs, for example, indicators, databases, etc.)?:

(a) >75%
 (b) 75-50%
 (c) 49-25%
 (d) < 25%

Indicator 4.3: Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations, including tradeoffs within quality, and to guide planning for existing and emerging surveys.

58. Do you have formal processes in place to deal with quality considerations, including tradeoffs within quality (such as tradeoffs between timeliness and accuracy)?

(a) YES (b) NO

59. Do you have a formal policy in place to guide the planning for new surveys?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 4.4: Quality guidelines are documented and staff is well trained. Such guidelines are set out in writing and made known to the public.

60. Does the statistical office have internal handbooks/guidelines/recommendations for the production of statistics?

(a) YES, for all
 (b) YES, for most
 (c) YES, for some
 (c) NO

61. In the affirmative, are they also available for external users?

(a) YES (b) NO

62. Do you have specific training programmes to address quality issues at your organization?

(a) YES
 (b) NO
 (c) NO, but such programmes are being planned

Please specify:

Indicator 4.5: There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs using external experts where appropriate.

63. How many of your statistical outputs do you review?

(a) >75%
 (b) 75-50%
 (c) 49-25%
 (d) < 25%

64. During the last three years did the findings from the reviews result in action plans?
-
- (a) YES, all (b) YES, most (c) YES, some (c) NO, none
65. During the last three years, were your statistical outputs subject to a Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) by the International Monetary Fund?
- (a) YES (b) NO
66. If so, please list the statistical areas that were reviewed:

PRINCIPLE 5: STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Full guarantees must be provided for the privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use for statistical purposes only.

Indicator 5.1: Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed by law.

67. Is statistical confidentiality guaranteed by national legislation?
- (a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 5.2: Statistical staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

68. Do staff members of the statistical office sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment?
- (a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 5.3: Substantial penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

69. Are penalties prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality by employees of the statistical authority?
- (a) YES (b) NO

70. Are penalties prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality by other persons?

(a) YES (b) NO

71. If so, please specify the legal grounds on which such penalties may be applied.

Indicator 5.4: Instructions and guidelines are provided on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. Such guidelines are set out in writing and made known to the public.

72. Are there instructions and guidelines for protecting statistical confidentiality? For example:

(a) for production of statistics YES NO

(b) for dissemination of statistics: YES NO

73. Are they made known to the public?

(a) YES

(b) Partly

(c) NO
[Skip to question 75]

74. To whom are they addressed? **Several responses are possible.**

(a) Not applicable

(b) Staff of the statistical office

(c) Other data producers

d) The media

e) Scientific community

e) Other

Please specify:

Indicator 5.5: Appropriate procedures are in place for protecting the security and integrity of statistical databases.

75. Does your organization have procedures in place to guarantee the security and integrity of its confidential data?

(a) YES (b) NO

[Skip to question 77]

76. If so, please indicate the procedures. **Several responses are possible.**

(a) Legal provisions

(b) Specific unit/department/division devoted to ensuring the security of the statistical database

(c) Technical provisions

e) Others

Please specify:

Indicator 5.6: Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

77. Does the statistical authority grant access to statistical microdata for research purposes?

(a) YES (b) NO

[Skip to question 82]

78. If so, on what basis is access granted?

(a) Legal provisions (b) Protocols (c) Others

Please specify:

79. Are there restrictions as to the organizations/institutions that may be granted access to statistical microdata?

(a) YES (b) NO

80. If so, please specify

81. How do you release statistical microdata to external users for research purposes? **Several responses are possible.**

- (a) In response to a formal written request from a division/department or official of an organization/institution
- (b) Online
- (c) Other **Please specify:**

PRINCIPLE 6: IMPARTIALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

In producing and disseminating official statistics, statistical authorities must demonstrate scientific independence and act in an objective, professional and transparent manner, ensuring that all users are treated equally.

Indicator 6.1: Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.

Indicator 6.2: The choice of sources and statistical technique is informed by statistical considerations.

82. Is there a policy in place that states that data sources and statistical techniques are selected for statistical reasons only

- (a) YES (b) NO
[Skip to question 84]

83. If so, have there been any violations of any such policies during the past two years?

- (a) YES (b) NO

84. Has the objectivity of official statistics been challenged by the media, users or the public during the past two years?

- (a) YES (b) NO

85. If so, please specify and give an example

Indicator 6.3:

Errors detected in published statistics are corrected and public notification is given at the earliest possible opportunity.

This indicator also refers to “Accessibility and Clarity” (*Principle 15*)

86. Is there a procedure in place for recording information about serious errors that may be detected in published data?

(a) YES (b) NO

87. Is there a rule that states how corrected data should be announced to users?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 6.4: Information on the methods and procedures used by the statistical authority is available to the public.

88. For how many of your statistical outputs do you publish information on the methods and procedures used on your website?

(a) >75% (b) 75-50% (c) 49-25% (d) < 25%

89. For how many of your statistical outputs is information on methods and procedures regularly updated?

(a) >75% (b) 75-50% (c) 49-25% (d) < 25%

Indicator 6.5: The dates and times of statistical release are pre-announced.

This indicator also refers to “Timeliness and Punctuality” (principle 13)

90. Do you publish in advance a release calendar for your main statistical outputs?

(a) YES (b) NO

[Skip to question 92]

91. If so, is there a procedure in place for reviewing this release calendar

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 6.6: All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time and any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is restricted, monitored and made public. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements should be reviewed so as to ensure impartiality.

92. Do all users have simultaneous access to press releases and notes relating to statistical outputs?

(a) YES (b) NO

93. If not, please explain why:

94. If not, please specify the user groups and situations.

95. If not, is information about this pre-release access available to the public?

(a) YES (b) NO

96. Have there been any occurrences during the past two years of information being divulged (leaked) prior to its official release?

(a) YES (b) NO

97. Does your organization have procedures in place to prevent leaks?

(a) YES (b) NO

Indicator 6.7: Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.

98. Do you have procedures in place to ensure objectivity in the content of statistical publications, releases, statements made in press conferences and similar events?

(a) YES (b) NO

99. If so, please specify.



