



Distr.
LIMITED
LC/L.3064(CEA.5/9)
4 August 2009
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Bogota, 10-13 August 2009

**REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES ***

* This report was prepared by the Dominican Republic, the coordinator of the Working Group.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. Purpose and scope	1
2. Activities conducted.....	1
3. Outputs and results	2
4. Statement delivered at the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.....	3
5. Objectives for the period 2009-2011	3
6. Structure and work methods.....	4
7. Recommendations for the Conference	4

1. Purpose and scope

The Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) arose from the concern expressed by several member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at the third meeting of the Conference, held in Santiago in June 2005, concerning the creation of a discussion forum on measuring access to and use of information and communications technologies. The purpose of the Group is to contribute to the development and dissemination of statistics and indicators relating to ICT and their comparability at the regional level through the sharing of national experiences and harmonization of methodologies.

2. Activities conducted

Since its creation, the Group has closely coordinated its activities with the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC) and this has enabled it to share experiences on measuring access to and use of ICT in the region. The Group has also served as a forum for discussing and disseminating the methodological issues and indicators proposed by the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development by fostering the implementation and harmonization of statistics on ICT in the region and facilitating the construction by ECLAC of a regional database of ICT statistics.

One significant outcome of this cooperation was the organization by OSILAC of the workshops on information society measurement in Latin America and the Caribbean. The working group played an active role in these workshops in Santiago, (November 2004), Santo Domingo (October 2005), Panama City (November 2006), San Salvador (February 2008) and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (April 2009). At these workshops, the Partnership's recommendations were disseminated and discussed, together with various methodological documents prepared by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other international agencies. The countries also shared their experiences in producing ICT statistics and debated, among other topics, conceptual and operational issues in an attempt to harmonize their criteria and procedures on how to design and conduct the household and business surveys from which the ICT data are obtained as well as on how to define and construct indicators.

The group took part in two workshops organized by the Latin American Network of Educational Portals (RELPE), which focused, in particular, on producing indicators on ICT access and use in education. The first was held in Santo Domingo in March 2008 and the second in Antigua, Guatemala, in August of that year.

In May 2009, experts from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile, the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia, the National Statistical Office (ONE) of the Dominican Republic, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico and OSILAC held a meeting at ECLAC headquarters to discuss a proposal for harmonizing methodological differences detected in compiling the manual on statistical practices.

3. Outputs and results

At the fourth meeting of the Conference (2007), two outputs on which OSILAC had collaborated were presented:

- The list of key indicators, jointly agreed at the regional level based on the proposal made by the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development in 2005.
- The Compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys.

Since then, the Group has made progress with producing the following outputs, which have been circulated among the countries for discussion and approval¹:

- The new list of ICT indicators, jointly agreed at the regional level based on the recommendations made in 2008 by the Partnership.
- The version of the Compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys, updated to 2008.
- A working document with recommendations on harmonizing the main methodological issues concerning ICT statistics for households and businesses, which continue to reveal differences between countries in the region, and proposed indicators of ICT access and use in the public sector and education.

The measurement of the proposed indicators at the regional level based on the new version of the Compendium of practices reveals the following:

- In their household surveys, 70% of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean included questions on access to radio, television, telephone service, computers and the Internet. In these cases, the available information allows for a calculation of all the ICT access indicators in households recommended by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. This percentage is higher in the case of Latin America overall, where 18 of the 20 countries included such questions.
- Regarding ICT use by individuals, 45% of the countries had incorporated questions for measuring Internet use, requesting details such as place of access and purpose and frequency of use. At least 15 of the 20 countries of Latin America included questions of this kind.
- With respect to business surveys, between 25% and 30% of the countries included questions on ICT. Specifically, according to the indicator, information is available on 8 of the 10 countries of Latin America.

These results, as well as the revision in the new version of the compendium of practices, underscore the substantial progress in achieving harmonized measurement of ICT statistics in the region

¹ See Analysis of methodological issues and new ICT indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.3078(CEA.5/16)).

and the significant role played by the working group and OSILAC in this process. Clearly, much remains to be done, especially in terms of harmonizing measurements and narrowing the measurement gap. Indeed, in some countries of the region, notably those of the English- and French-speaking Caribbean, that gap is still very wide.

4. Statement delivered at the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

On behalf of the Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, the representative of the coordinating country, the Dominican Republic, made a statement at the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (New York, February 2009) in connection with the report of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

On that occasion, the representative drew attention to the Partnership's work of promoting the production and harmonization of ICT statistics, including methodological manuals and lists of key indicators, and underscored the efforts made in that regard by the countries of the region and by ECLAC, OSILAC and the Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies of the Statistical Conference.

5. Objectives for the period 2009-2011

The main objectives set for the Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies for 2009-2011 are as follows:

- To contribute to the discussion and dissemination of new indicators proposed by the Partnership on ICT access and use by individuals, households, businesses, Governments and key sectors, such as the educational and health sectors.
- To help implement and harmonize existing indicators in the region by drawing up recommendations and preparing discussion papers.
- To participate in the continual updating of the Compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business survey by national statistical institutes, as well as statistics on ICT access and use by the public sector and the education and health sectors.
- To promote strengthening of the OSILAC regional database by encouraging countries to send in the results of the relevant measurements.
- To support the definition of quantifiable indicators and targets for the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (eLac 2010).

6. Structure and work methods

In order to fulfil the proposed objectives, and given the experience with the functioning of the working group, it is suggested that the group's structure be changed and that a smaller group of countries be responsible for drafting discussion papers and recommendations for distribution and discussion by the members of the Conference.

Under this arrangement, the Plan of Action would include meetings of the working group on specific thematic units (households, businesses, education, health, eLac) with other institutions, when needed (ministers of education and health, among others).

Notwithstanding the above, the various events where activities are jointly conducted, such as the regional workshops organized by OSILAC, may be open in a general manner to all the countries of the region.

7. Recommendations for the Conference

The Conference may wish to request the relevant bodies and ECLAC to promote the coordinated participation of the statistical institutes, represented by the working group, the appropriate sectoral departments (national authorities on education, health and other issues) and international agencies with a view to fulfilling the objectives relating to ICT in education, the public sector and other key sectors.

In order to ensure effective cooperation on defining eLac targets and indicators, the Working Group should be instructed to participate actively in eLac discussion forums.

The Conference may also wish to endorse the proposal for restructuring the group, as outlined in the section on structure and work methods, and to invite the member countries to join the working group in its new form.