

Classifications *Newsletter*

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Expert Group discusses future work on classifications

The Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications met for its biennial meeting from 18 to 20 May 2011 in New York. Thirty experts from 27 countries and organizations gathered to review progress, follow up on previous decisions and discuss future steps in the work on international classifications.

The meeting was organized according to several thematic topics. For each topic, a number of papers on relevant, and often interconnected issues, was available and the papers were introduced through short presentations at the beginning of each session that highlighted the main issues raised and questions posed to the Expert Group. The topics discussed covered the mandate and work arrangements for the group, the review of product classifications and their impact on the CPC, the review of progress on other classifications, as well as classifications management issues.

Mandate of the Expert Group

Following up on discussions at the previous meeting of the Expert Group, an update of the mandate of the group and a review of its working mechanisms took place. Some members had put forward proposals for new terms of reference for the group, as well as a document outlining basic principles for the development of classifications, which by and large were accepted by the group (see below for a more detailed discussion).

To provide more flexibility in reacting to classifications developments and to be able to function effectively in periods between the biennial meetings, the group agreed to establish a Bureau that will coordinate the Expert Group's actions and response at such times. The Bureau members will be elected for a two-year period. In-between meetings the Bureau will be the focal point of the Expert Group; it will carry out administrative tasks related to the functioning of the Expert Group, consider and solve technical issues when required, and involve other group members where necessary. This

arrangement will ensure a response and involvement of the Expert Group on a more continuous basis than before. At the end of the meeting, the group elected its first Bureau.

The scope of the work of the Expert Group was the subject of intense discussions, closely linked to the definition of the International Family of Classifications.

As in the past, the Expert Group can create subgroups with a specific mandate and lifespan for specific technical tasks to be carried out. Such subgroups can invite other experts (outside the Expert Group) to join for specific tasks. These subgroups report back to the Expert Group for review and decision-making. During the course of the meeting, several such subgroups for development tasks were created.

The group agreed that its work will focus on setting directions and ensuring harmonization of the work on classifications, as well as the promotion and implementation of best practices for classifications. This work will be restricted to the set of classifications in the International Family of Classifications, meaning that regional classifications will not be a primary focus of the work of group, as other regional bodies are concerned with their development and maintenance, usually based on international standards. The group will however assist in such development if requested by the respective custodian to ensure compliance with best practice principles and proper linkage with international classifications.

The International Family of Classifications will be the focus of the work of the Expert Group. The concept of this Family will essentially be enlarged to consider a larger set of candidates, while the strict criteria that had been used in the past (and will now be spelled out more precisely in the Best Practices document) will continue to be used to evaluate these classifications and determine their status in the Family.

Classifications will be considered due to their importance as key classifications in individual or

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multiple statistical domains. While the Family will of course include the classifications that have been approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission or other competent international body, the Expert Group will work closely with the custodians of other classifications that are relevant for individual or multiple statistical domains, but have not yet obtained this form of approval or do not yet meet classifications criteria set out in the Best Practices document to raise them up to that level. As a first step in this process, the Expert Group will prepare a comprehensive list of classifications that could be considered as candidates for the Family.

The new mandate, while agreed by the Expert Group, is still subject to approval by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its next session in 2012.

Review of the CPC

Adhering to previous recommendations by the Expert Group, a review of the Central Product Classification (CPC) should be undertaken every five years. At the previous meeting of the Expert Group, potential inputs into a review of the CPC had been discussed. At that point, no decision was taken on whether or not a change to the classification was necessary. However, it was agreed that additional work on these potential inputs should continue to produce concrete proposals. At the present meeting, the group considered the information these different processes had produced to determine whether changes to the CPC were warranted.

The different inputs identified at the previous meeting included: (a) the 2012 amendments to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS); (b) the new Standard International Energy Products Classification (SIEC) and its links to the CPC Ver.2; (c) the new proposed modifications to the CPC based on the work of the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) and (d) observations and corrections based on the existing structure, explanatory notes and correspondence tables of the CPC Ver.2.

After reviewing the different inputs provided, the Expert Group agreed to proceed with an update of the CPC, which would result in CPC Ver.2.1. The

expected change was labelled an **update**, and not a **revision**, since it is restricted to limited areas of the goods part of the CPC only and involves only rearrangements or subdivisions at the lower levels (class, subclass) of the classification. No changes at higher levels of the classification are planned.

It is expected that the updated draft of the CPC be available for review by the Statistical Commission in 2012.

This update of the CPC may also take into account information from additional work on other classifications, such as the Classification by Broad Economic Categories (BEC) or classifications still being developed in the context of new guidelines on environmental-economic accounting, if they become available in time for this update of the CPC and do not exceed the scope set for this update.

A Technical Subgroup has been formed to carry out the technical tasks for this update.

Work on other classifications and other issues

The Expert Group also discussed planned, ongoing or completed work for a number of other classifications, including the just completed revision of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the progress in the revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), planned changes to the Classification by Broad Economic Categories (BEC), a potential classification of business functions to support the statistical description of international value chains and others. An update on the work on classifications in the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting was also presented for information to the group. Separate articles in this and the next newsletter(s) will provide more detailed information on these plans and developments.

Additional discussions took place on a number of other topics during the meeting, some of which will receive more prominence in future work programmes of the Expert Group. All papers and presentations for the meeting, including the final report, are available on the United Nations Statistics Division's classifications website at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/class/intercop/expertgroup/2011/ac234-2.asp>

A new ISCED: Reflecting today's education systems

UNESCO Institute for Statistics

This November, the proposed International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 will be considered for adoption by the 36th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, France. The Education Commission will review the revised classification, which takes into account significant changes in the organisation of education systems worldwide since 1997, as was mandated in a resolution of the 34th General Conference in 2007. The proposal is the result of extensive consultation of international, regional and national experts in education and statistics over the past three years, including a global consultation in 2010. The review has been coordinated by the custodian for the classification, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), in close collaboration with relevant international organizations, in particular its education data collection partners OECD and Eurostat.

The ISCED revision process

A Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) of 16 education and statistics experts from across the world, including representatives of key international organisations, helped to guide the ISCED revision.¹ The TAP advised on the scope and strategy of the review and took part in the development of detailed proposals for the revision. The panel met five times between January 2009 and February 2011.

In 2009 and 2010, the detailed proposals for the revision were discussed in separate regional meetings of experts from the Arab States, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Discussions on the proposals also took place over this period with national experts attending meetings on education statistics held by Eurostat and OECD, and at other international and regional conferences, including the World Conference on Higher Education in June 2009. In addition, the early

¹ Members of the TAP were from Africa, the Arab States, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and Latin America. Nine of the original TAP members were from developing countries. Organizations that were represented include Eurostat, OECD, UIS, UNESCO and UNICEF.

proposals were presented and discussed at a meeting of the United Nations Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications in September 2009.

The initial proposals were revised in the light of feedback from the regional and international experts consulted and a global consultation on a draft ISCED 2011 text was launched in June 2010.

All Member States of UNESCO – including both Ministries of Education and, with the assistance of the United Nations Statistics Division, all national statistical offices – were invited to comment. In addition, the proposals were sent to members of the United Nations Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications, members of the ISCED Technical Advisory Panel, national and regional experts who were invited to the regional meetings on ISCED in 2009 and 2010, and relevant international agencies. The feedback of national contacts responsible for submitting data on education, literacy or educational attainment to the UIS or its education data collection partners was also sought.

Over 110 responses were received from more than 80 countries. The responses were largely supportive of the revision. All substantive comments and suggestions were reviewed by the editorial subgroup of the TAP in December 2010 and by the full TAP at its final meeting in February 2011, and the draft text was revised accordingly.

What has changed in the new proposed ISCED?

Overall, the text has been clarified, expanded and improved from the previous version (ISCED 1997). Following is a summary of the new developments in the proposed ISCED 2011 classification:

a) ISCED 0 has been extended and renamed.

The lowest level of education (ISCED 0) is now called 'early childhood education' and includes educational programmes for very young children (typically aged 0-2 years) as a separate sub-category entitled 'early childhood educational development'. This allows for continuity of time series of statistics on pre-primary education – programmes for children aged 3 to the start of ISCED 1.

b) Tertiary levels have been diversified.

The revision proposes four levels of tertiary education (extended from two levels in ISCED 1997): Short cycle tertiary; Bachelor level and equivalent; Master level and equivalent; and Doctorate level and equivalent. Therefore, ISCED 2011 has nine levels – two more than ISCED 1997 (see Table 1).

c) Definitions of the different types of education have been elaborated.

In particular, there are additional details on formal and non-formal education, which allow for a more precise definition of the coverage of education within ISCED.

d) Programme orientation has been simplified.

Instead of three, there are now only two orientation categories (general and vocational).

e) A new subcategory related to ISCED level completion has been introduced.

The concept of (successful) completion of ISCED levels – with or without access to higher levels of education – replaces the ISCED 1997 concept of programme destination and better distinguishes between completion and non-completion of ISCED levels.

f) Educational attainment as a derived variable is now included in the classification.

This variable takes into account recognized formal qualifications, as well as the successful completion of educational programmes.

g) Two parallel coding systems have been developed.

The coding systems for educational programmes (ISCED-P) and for educational attainment (ISCED-A) are both 3-digit schemes.

h) New governance procedures have been proposed.

These include measures to ensure the effective adoption and implementation of the new ISCED, including an ISCED Committee and peer reviews of mappings.

i) Glossary terms have been added.

A core glossary of around 70 terms has been included in the text, and a more extensive online glossary is planned following the adoption of ISCED 2011.

Table 1. Correspondence between the education levels of ISCED 1997 and proposed ISCED 2011

| ISCED 1997 | Proposed ISCED 2011 |
|---|--|
| | 0 Early childhood education* Early childhood educational development* (designed for children aged under 3 years) |
| 0 Pre-primary (designed for children aged 3 years and above) | Pre-primary (designed for children aged 3 years and above) |
| 1 Primary (or 1st stage of basic education)** | 1 Primary |
| 2 Lower secondary (or second stage of basic education)** | 2 Lower secondary |
| 3 Upper secondary | 3 Upper secondary |
| 4 Post-secondary non-tertiary | 4 Post-secondary non-tertiary |
| 5 First stage of tertiary | 5 Short-cycle tertiary* 6 Bachelor or equivalent* 7 Master or equivalent* |
| 6 Second stage of tertiary | 8 Doctoral or equivalent* |

* New in proposed ISCED 2011.

** ISCED 2011 no longer uses the term 'basic education' in the definition of level.

Next steps for revised classification

Following adoption of the updated classification, the UIS and its data collection partners (Eurostat and OECD) will begin to work with countries to map their education systems to the new classification and revise data collection instruments accordingly. An operational manual is currently under preparation and is expected to be available in early 2012. Additional training materials will also be developed. In accordance with new governance procedures, mechanisms for peer reviews of ISCED mappings will be established, and an ISCED advisory committee will be formed. The first international data collections based on the new ISCED will begin in 2013 or 2014 to give countries adequate time to adapt their national data reporting systems. The implementation of the new ISCED in household surveys and censuses may not occur until 2015.

Finally, a revision of the fields of education and training is planned with a view to adoption by 2013. It is proposed that the fields of education will eventually be separated as an independent, though related, classification alongside the ISCED.

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Quick facts about ISCED

Who is the custodian?

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is responsible for the maintenance, updating and revision of the ISCED.

How does ISCED fit in the International Family of Economic and Social Classifications?

ISCED is a reference classification under Employment, Occupation and Education.

When was the classification first introduced?

ISCED was first developed by UNESCO in 1976. The classification was updated in 1997; and the 2011 revision will be the third version.

What are the statistical units?

The statistical units are the educational programmes and according to the new proposed classification, resulting qualifications.

Is the classification flat or hierarchical?

The statistical units are classified into a hierarchy of educational levels, based on increasing complexity of educational content.

Does ISCED include all forms of education?

The scope of ISCED covers formal and non-formal educational programmes and any resulting recognized formal educational qualifications. Informal, incidental or random learning are excluded, as are non-formal or unrecognised qualifications.

What about the fields of education?

ISCED 1997 includes 25 fields of education organized in nine broad groups. There is a plan to update the fields in a subsequent revision over the next few years.

Where can I find information on the web about ISCED?

The current and proposed ISCED classification (in all 6 official UN languages), as well as ISCED mappings of national education programmes can be found at the following: www.uis.unesco.org/ISCED

The ASFIS classification of aquatic species by FAO broadens its scope

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Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics and Information Service (FIPS)

The “ASFIS List of species for fishery statistics purposes” was established in 2000 by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics and Information Service (FIPS) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to include species items selected according to their interest or relation to fisheries and aquaculture. However, in the last couple of years its scope broadened as a larger number of national and international institutions adopted the List as their reference classification system for aquatic species and FAO-FIPS received increasing requests to cover also species not directly related to fishery activities, e.g. those living in Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs).

Due to this expanded coverage, the 2011 release of the List (an annual update is usually made available at the end of March) included a bulk addition of over 650 new records and more than 100 new families (mostly invertebrates), reaching a total of 11,562 records. The List can be downloaded at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/collection/asfis/en> where detailed information on the criteria adopted, structure of the database, and main sources is also available.

The FAO-FIPS collates world capture and aquaculture production statistics at either the species, genus, family or higher taxonomic levels in statistical categories referred to as species items. For each species item stored in a record, the ASFIS List provides codes (ISSCAAP group, taxonomic and 3-alpha), taxonomic information (scientific name, author(s), family and higher classification), and the availability of fishery production statistics in the FAO databases. In addition, about 75% of the records have an English name, 41% a French name, and 37% a

Spanish name. Arabic and Chinese names have been also assigned to the main species items and work in under way for Russian names, although names in these additional languages are not directly incorporated into the List but stored in separate files.

Regarding the codes used in the List, the "International Standard Statistical Classification for Aquatic Animals and Plants" (ISSCAAP) divides aquatic species into 50 groups on the basis of their taxonomic, ecological and economic characteristics. The taxonomic code is used by FAO for a more detailed classification of the species items and for sorting them out within each ISSCAAP group. The 3-alpha identifier is a unique code made of three letters that is widely used for the exchange of data with national correspondents and among fishery agencies in the framework of the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics (CWP), and it has been included in national and international legislation (e.g. European Union). As there are more than 17,500 possible combinations of the 26 characters of the English alphabet forming the 3-alpha code, the List can be further expanded using the same codification system.

The ASFIS List is linked through the ISSCAAP codification to the FAO International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishery Commodities (ISSCFC), which was developed for the collation of national data in fishery commodities production and trade databases. The ISSCFC is an expansion of the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev.4) developed by the United Nations' Statistical Office, which in turn is linked to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (abbreviated to HS) of the World Customs Organization. FAO actively participated in the consultation process on the latest revision of the HS, in particular for products derived from fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic animals and plants. Amendments recommended to the HS nomenclature will enter into force on 1 January 2012.

Activities are also envisaged for the revision of fishery related items in the Central Product Classification (CPC). In addition, the ASFIS List provides a standard taxonomic reference for scientific and common names used by the international network of input centres contributing to the "Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts" (ASFA) bibliographic database.

Editorial note

The Classifications Newsletter summarizes recent developments in the field of international classifications, announces upcoming events and draws attention to the availability of relevant classifications material in print and on the Internet. The Classifications Newsletter can be found on the United Nations Classifications Website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/class> under "Newsletter".

To receive the Classifications Newsletter by e-mail, you can sign up for our Newsletter mailing list at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regmaillist.asp> or select "Mailing list" from the menu at the Classifications Website. For further information please contact the Classifications Hotline:

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