



Economic Commission
for Africa



Advisory Board on
Statistics in Africa

Annual Meeting
10-11 May 2004
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Report of the meeting on Information Society Statistics

ECA/ABSA/05/2004/E17

Coordinating Meeting on Information Society Statistics (New York, 5 March 2004)

Report of the meeting (UNSD)

The group identified two main concerns:

1. ITU, UNESCO, UNCTAD and DESA's Public Administration Division stressed the urgent need for worldwide coordination and division of labour with regards to **ICT data collection and dissemination** in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
 - a) ITU mentioned a natural division of labour of Information Society indicators between specialized Agencies, such as for example:
 - ITU: ICT infrastructure indicators
 - DESA Public:Administration: e-government indicators
 - UNCTAD: e-business indicators
 - UNESCO: education and information society indicators;
 - b) UNESCO pointed out the difference and complementarities between ICT indicators and Information Society indicators and underlined the importance for a comprehensive Information Society indicators approach;
 - c) ECA presented its SCAN-ICT initiative. In a broad approach toward the Information Society, the initiative aims at collecting data from several governmental departments in six different countries;
 - d) UNCTAD quickly presented its WebSite <http://measuring-ict.unctad.org> and offered to start dialogue with the participants of the meeting about the future of this tool.
2. Regional Commissions stressed the urgent need for **assisting countries in their approach toward ICT statistics**, in order to assure harmonization on an international level and to create synergies between different national agencies.

The group agreed to proceed with the approach presented by ECLAC, to use a questionnaire as an inclusive tool to take inventory on metadata in NSOs. The main objectives of the questionnaire should be:

- Starting a working relation with NSOs in the field of Information Society statistics through a participative approach;
- Creating a sense of ownership of the process with NSOs and involve them from the start of the process;
- Providing input to regional information society indicators workshops, to be held during the second half of 2004;

- Working toward a common set of core indicators for household and business surveys, which can be considered for adoption by NSOs.

With regards to the questionnaire, several concerns have been raised during the discussion:

- Motivated by WSIS and other demands, some NSOs are pressing to integrate ICT indicators into their work programme. It would be important to start a working relationship with them as soon as possible, in order to assure a coordinated approach toward Information Society statistics worldwide. A process of awareness raising and guidance should be started with them;
- Convergence with the work of the OECD annual working party WPIIS (Working Party on Indicators for the Information Society) is of outermost importance. The next WPIIS meeting will be on 29-30 April 2004;
- A potential geographic division of labor between OECD and the Regional Commissions should be considered in an inventory taking approach, in order to avoid double efforts;
- It might be necessary to create tailor-made versions of the questionnaire for different regions, while a common core should be shared by all versions;
- During the inventory taking exercise it should be considered that NSOs are often not aware of all ICT and Information Society indicators available in their countries. The exercise of inventory taking should therefore be seen as a tool to integrate NSOs in a participative and transparent approach toward international standardization of indicators and as a basis to start a trusted working relationship on the topic with NSOs, which is a first step toward technical assistance. The metadata obtained however, will not substitute verification work by international organizations, it will rather be complementary to existing information of metadata, as already carried out by ITU, UNESCO, the OECD or the Regional Commissions;
- The search for an internationally harmonized set of core indicators should not neglect national particularities and priorities. Indicators should be based on the needs of policy making. Since indicators need to respect national policy priorities, the list of indicators needs to show the required flexibility;
- It was stressed that, on the one hand, the questionnaire should be as short as possible, whereas, on the other hand, it was mentioned that it would be interesting to get insight into relevant sectors in addition to households and businesses (especially education and human capital);
- The process and its outcome should be transparent, public and open to the participation of other organizations, in order to avoid future duplications of this effort.

The group agreed on the need of a chronogram for future proceedings. It is as follows:

Date	Action
Until 19 March	Comments on the questionnaire will be very welcomed and received by ECLAC: jcferraz@eclac.cl and mhilbert@eclac.cl
29 March 2004 - UN ICT Task Force meeting's session on ICT indicators and MDGs	The received comments will have been compiled and provided
1 st April 2004	A new draft version of the questionnaire will be sent to the group for approval
9 April 2004	Deadline for approval of the new draft or comments for change
12 April – 17 April 2004	Incorporation of comments of new version
29-30 April 2004 – OECD Working Party on Indicators for the Information Society (WPIIS)	The group will have the updated draft for discussion with experts from OECD's WPIIS
During May 2004	A questionnaire test will be tested at least in one NSO per region

Since many of the participants of the coordination meeting from 5 March will be present at the OECD's WPIIS in the end of April 2004, it was agreed that the group should have its second coordination meeting at that opportunity, in order to evaluate the questionnaire and discuss future steps to be taken.

Annexe: List of participants

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