

Statistical Commission

Thirty-fourth session

4-7 March 2003

Item 6(e) of the provisional agenda

Coordination and integration of statistical programmes

Background Document

01 March 2003

Report on Common Open Standards for the
Exchange and Sharing of Socio-economic Data and Metadata:
the SDMX Initiative

Prepared by the Bank for International Settlements, the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, and the United Nations Statistics Division.

I. Introduction

1. The Statistical Commission was introduced to the work of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative in a report submitted to the thirty-third session by the International Monetary Fund on behalf of the six sponsoring organizations. This paper will provide an update to the Commission of the work of SDMX since that time.

2. During the past year SDMX initiated a work program that consisted of projects that addressed four topics: batch time series data exchange, metadata repositories, metadata common vocabulary, and a pilot implementation of data exchange using emerging technologies for information exchange. It also adopted a more formal albeit simple governance structure.

II. A survey of the SDMX Projects

3. The projects all have a manager or managers who oversee and direct the work of the project. Projects are responsible for obtaining and organizing participation in their work. The projects are also individually vetting their outputs with feedback from interested experts and groups from around the world.

A practical case study on emerging e-standards

4. The objective of this project is to investigate the practical ways in which emerging web technologies can be used to standardize and simplify the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistical information and to identify the core set of e-standards that are required to

achieve the full potential of emerging web technologies (e.g., XML and web services). Work is currently underway in the following activities:

- Agreement/publication of work program, identification of core project team (completed)
- Identification of key models and scope for case study demonstration (completed)
- Experimental standards for statistical exchange and information sharing examples
- Case study demonstration
- Proposal for next steps

5. Countries or individuals wishing to participate may indicate their areas of interest to the project manager at stuart.feder@bis.org.

Batch time series data exchange

6. The aim of the project is to maintain GESMES/CB for existing users and to promote GESMES/CB among potential users where this is to the benefit of SDMX organizations and their partner institutions. Work is currently underway in the following activities:

- Establishment and publication of work program (completed)
- Release of the next version of GESMES/CB and Updated User Guide
- List of institutions and organisations that are (or are interested in) using GESMES/CB
- Promotion and training programme to foster use of GESMES/CB

- Standards setting process for GESMES/CB
- Proposal concerning the use of XML syntax for GESMES/CB

7. Countries or individuals wishing to participate may indicate their areas of interest to the project managers at christos.androvitsaneas@ecb.int , gabriele.becker@bis.org or amcphail@imf.org.

A metadata common vocabulary

8. The aim of the project is to develop a common understanding of standard metadata items focusing on descriptions of statistical concepts and methodologies used by statisticians in the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistical data. The immediate objective is to develop a Metadata Common Vocabulary (MCV) of those standard components. Such a common vocabulary should utilize terminology in existing international statistical guidelines and recommendations where available. Where suitable terminology is not available in existing international standards, terminology being used in SDMX organizations, by national agencies and, to the extent possible, in other related projects to develop international standards, will be used. The Vocabulary will be available as a stand-alone document and ultimately in the form of an electronic glossary supporting consultation and use. Work is currently underway in the following activities:

- Establish and publish the work program (completed)
- Preparation of an initial draft Vocabulary of key metadata items, related standard definitions, and context explanations that can be

used in existing dissemination frameworks, and placement on the SDMX website for comment/feedback. (completed).

- Incorporation of feedback into the draft Vocabulary.
- Preparation of an initial release version of the Vocabulary both as a stand-alone document and electronic (database) format.
- Linkage (or mapping) of metadata atomic items in the MCV to existing dissemination frameworks. Priority will be given to current dissemination formats, such as the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), Eurostat's Euroindicators, and the OECD Main Economic Indicators.

9. Countries or individuals wishing to participate may indicate their areas of interest to the project managers at Marco.Pellegrino@cec.eu.int or Denis.Ward@oecd.org .

Metadata repositories

10. The purpose of the metadata repositories project is to enable Internet users to access, analyze, and repurpose statistical metadata from multiple websites using protocols that operate independent of the computing platform (hardware and software). In order to achieve this objective, the project seeks to harmonize descriptions of the common concepts and methodologies used in the collection, processing, and dissemination of statistical datasets. The project will be based on the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) and, to facilitate exchange across

systems, will use the Extensible Markup Language (XML) for their statistical metadata. Work is currently underway in the following activities:

- Establishment and publication of the work program and information regarding the core project team (completed)
- Development of an open and scaleable metadata repositories architecture
- Documented consultation with national statistical agencies and SDMX partners
- Identification of standard and data-category-specific SDDS/GDDS metadata items, and associated key concepts (completed)
- Provision of a Draft XML Schema and Protocols
- XML and Protocol Vetting and Consultation
- Implementation and Pilot Testing

11. Countries or individuals wishing to participate may indicate their areas of interest to the project manager at rdicalogero@imf.org.

III. Looking forward

12. The sponsors committee currently envisages holding its second annual meeting, probably in June. The meeting will occasion a review of the current four projects and consideration of new projects and possible new directions.

How to become involved in SDMX

Prospective participants may contact the individuals listed under the projects directly. They may also e-mail the Coordinating Committee at SDMX@imf.org or send this form by facsimile to SDMX at ++1-202-623-6460.

In all cases please indicate your area(s) of interest and any resources that you may be able to contribute to the SDMX endeavor.

Possible areas of interest

A practical case study on emerging e-standards

Batch time series data exchange

A metadata common vocabulary

Metadata repositories

Other Please Explain _____

Resources you may wish to bring to SDMX

Your Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Telephone _____ **Facsimile** _____