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**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE**

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Topic (iv) International cooperation/collaboration

Using key indicators to facilitate wider knowledge sharing

Invited Paper

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I. Introduction

1. This paper presents a very simple proposal, but one that we believe could have a real impact on the way in which statistical organisations collaborate. The proposal is to invite and encourage all national and international statistical organisations to share with each other some basic information about their organisation and how it uses technology, using a simple standardised template.
2. The resulting collection of completed templates can form the basis for organisations to find others that are facing, or have already addressed, issues, on the basis of similarity and experience. Whilst this might be seen as a simple form of benchmarking, it is not intended to be the end-point of comparison between organisations; it is rather intended to be the point of connection so that two or more organisations can share relevant experiences and form mutually beneficial collaborations.

II. Background

A. The need to share

3. The community of statistical organisations is relatively small - last year's MSIS was the largest ever, attended by about 35 national and international statistical organisations. From an IT perspective, this community faces a number of unique problems, and the peculiarities of producing statistical outputs is not one that has received a great deal of attention from commercial software or service suppliers. The combination of unique problems and a small and globally distributed community does not make this a very attractive commercial prospect.

4. Consequently, most statistical organisations use a combination of generic tools and bespoke software to support their business processes. That they share much in common is evidenced in the development and growing adoption of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), and in the adoption of common international standards for exchanging statistical information.

5. The high cost of developing scalable, reliable statistical business systems from generic tools and application programming languages has led to the sharing of some system solutions and software components, but for many organisations, this form of reuse represents a very small proportion of their total IT estate.

6. As organisations seek to reduce their costs and deploy their scarce and expensive IT resources for maximum benefit, there has been a recent growth in the desire for international organisations to share their IT experiences and collaborate in future developments.

B. Finding a partner

7. How should an organisation find partners from whom it can learn, or with whom it can collaborate? Whilst this is a relatively small community, it is widely distributed geographically, and meetings to share problems and experiences are relatively short and happen rarely. IT problems are often quite specific - relating to one part of the GSBPM, or one type of statistical input or output, or a chosen technology platform.

8. The choice of potential partners today is often based on traditional ties and personal relationships. This remains a valuable means of exchanging information, yet it runs the risk of missing potential partnerships that might be more relevant to the problem in hand. This paper therefore proposes the creation of an exchange of basic IT and business characteristics or Key Indicators, that can be used as a means of looking across the whole community of national and international statistical organisations and narrowing down the choice of potential partner on the basis of a comparison of those Key Indicators.

III. The proposed Key Indicators

A. What should we share?

9. We propose that organisations share two types of information:

- (a) Key Business Indicators
- (b) Key Technical Indicators

10. The Key Business Indicators are simple facts about the size and scale of the organisation and its IT operation. This is numeric information that can be used to sort and filter community members as part of a partner search. However, members are invited to provide supplementary comments alongside the factual information where further explanation may be valuable.

11. The Key Business Indicators are: (columns scale automatically)

Question

An- swer Com- ment

How many employees are there in total in your organisation?

[i.e. all people on the payroll of your organisation](#)

How many employees work in your IT function:

[number of full-time equivalent IT staff, including programmers, analysts and similar, but not statisticians](#)

a) in application development and support?

b) in IT infrastructure (hardware and operating systems operations, maintenance and

administration)?

c) in IT support (including help desk and business relations)?

d) in other activities (including executive team, enterprise architecture and strategy)?

What percentage of your total IT budget is spent on developing new systems or functionality?

including development of existing systems, but not routine maintenance

How many different offices does your organisation have?

i.e. physical locations that function as separate entities within your organisation

How many statistical outputs or publications does your organisation produce each year?

all kinds of official report: press releases, newsletters, electronic and paper publications. An estimate is OK

How many end-user workstations (desktop or laptop) do you have to support?

i.e. physical keyboards on desks or used by field staff. If you use virtualisation, please elaborate in the comment field on the number of images etc.

If a national organisation, what is the total population of your country?

If a national organisation, what percentage of all official government statistical outputs is produced by your organisation?

An estimate is OK

12. The Key Technical Indicators are intended to capture a richer description of the strategic direction for IT at the organisation. Only textual responses are sought, which are suitable for filtering via a search engine, or more probably, for interpretation by users seeking organisations that are facing similar issues.

13. The Key Technical Indicators are: (columns scale automatically)

What strategic choices have you made regarding the following:

Answer

Server hardware

Desktop hardware

Server operating systems

Desktop operating systems

Server virtualisation

Desktop virtualisation

Corporate storage

Data centres (internal / external)

Statistical tools or statistical languages

Database management systems

Web servers / application servers

Development / application platforms

Service Oriented Architecture (used / not used; which standard?)

ERP systems for corporate services (e.g. HR & Finance)

The Generic Statistical Business Process Model

Statistical data collection

Statistical publication and data dissemination

Web data dissemination (single / multiple web sites)

SDMX

DDI

Other relevant strategic choices

14. In proposing the lists of Key Business and Technical Indicators, the authors recognise that a much richer set of indicators could have been proposed. However, completion of the template is a burden, and the dominant aim has been to make it as easy as possible for all relevant organisations to complete the template. Accordingly, there should be no difficulty for all organisations to provide the simple factual information contained within the Key Business Indicators, while the Key Technical Indicators provide a framework for organisations to provide as much, or as little, information as they wish. This first attempt to gather comparative information about statistical organisations has therefore chosen breadth over depth in the first instance.

III. Getting them populated

A. procedure

15. As with all forms of collaboration, this initiative can only succeed with the active participation of the community. The next step is for national and international statistical organisations to populate the template on the MSIS wiki.

16. A good first step would be for all countries attending this MSIS to do so.

B. Confidentiality

17. In many countries, the information captured in these questions will already be publicly available either through existing publications or via local freedom of information legislation. However, we recognise that not all statistical institutes and international organisations will be at ease with the idea that the key indicator figures of their organisations should be in the public domain and these concerns may interfere with our desire to maximise the number of NSIs prepared to put their figures on the wiki. We therefore believe that possible concerns about publicly sharing this information may be reduced by ensuring that this information is only seen by our peers.

18. We propose to publish these figures on the MSIS wiki in the 'members only' section so only the persons in the organisations that are allowed to logon, have access to these figures. In this way the key indicator figures will remain private to the NSIs and international institutes. Measures will be taken to prevent search engines entering this area.