

## UPDATE OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES – FOLLOW-UP TO CES

Prepared by UNECE

*The Conference of European Statisticians' (CES) Bureau is the custodian of the Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA). In February 2020, the Bureau requested a dedicated Task Team to update the Classification to include new, emerging areas of international statistical work. A draft updated version of the Classification (CSA 2.0) was electronically consulted with the CES members and submitted to the CES plenary session in June 2022. The Conference took note of the feedback received through e-consultation, and requested the Task Team to continue work towards an internationally agreed global classification.*

*The Bureau is informed about the progress since June 2022. The Bureau is welcome to comment on the updating proposals and further steps.*

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The Conference of European Statisticians' (CES) Bureau is the custodian of the Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA). The Classification was established in 2005 to be used as the basis for providing information in the Database of International Statistical Activities, maintained by UNECE. However, over the years the CSA has become a global reference used by different international organizations and countries as it is the only international classification covering all statistical topics at a highly aggregated level. Therefore, the CES Bureau requested the revision of the Classification<sup>1</sup>, to include new, emerging areas of international statistical work.

### II. UPDATING PROCESS OF THE CLASSIFICATION

2. A Task Team to update the Classification was established in March 2020 with representatives from Canada, Ireland, Mexico (Chair), New Zealand, Eurostat, UNSD and UNECE.

3. The Task Team developed a draft updated Classification (CSA 2.0) over two years and numerous teleconferences. The updated version reflected the consensus of the Task Team after

<sup>1</sup> ECE/CES/BUR/2020/FEB/14, [https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2020/14-Updating\\_CSA\\_classification\\_approved.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2020/14-Updating_CSA_classification_approved.pdf)

analysing and incorporating user feedback (from a survey among international organizations) and the standpoints of the group members. General principles of the Classification were thoroughly discussed, such as mutual exclusivity and uses of the CSA. The Task Team aimed to retain the classification's coherence and align it as much as possible with the existing statistical frameworks. Through the discussions, the Task Team consolidated views and came to a consensus that was reflected in CSA 2.0.

4. The Task Team agreed that the Classification is/can be used for two main purposes:

a) Based on the process related to a statistical activity, CSA can be used to classify statistical events, capacity building activities, training courses, working groups, publications or statistical standards, etc.;

b) Based on the output of a statistical activity, CSA can be used to classify data and metadata (particularly domains 1 to 5 which are related to subject-matter activities).

5. The Task Team agreed that CSA is an analytical classification and not designed to be mutually exclusive. It is not used in the production of statistics and therefore there is no problem with double counting. In some cases, an item can be classified in several areas and the user can decide where to place it according to their specific need.

6. The Classification can be used as a reference leading to better harmonisation in structuring information about activities of statistical organizations, dissemination websites, publications, etc. Its aim is not to prescribe an organizational structure of a statistical office or statistical production process, or data dissemination. Countries and organizations are welcome to adjust the Classification to their purposes and context.

7. The CES Bureau reviewed the CSA 2.0 in February 2022 and decided that it can be sent for electronic consultation to all CES members. The Bureau also agreed to make the CSA a global classification as many of the international organizations who are using it have a global coverage, and a number of countries from different regions are using the CSA.

### **III. CONSIDERATION AT CES IN JUNE 2022**

8. In preparation for the CES 2022 plenary session, the draft CSA 2.0 was electronically consulted with all CES member countries and organizations in April-May 2022. Forty-eight replies to the consultation were received from the CES members.

9. As the CSA 2.0 is planned to become a global classification, UNSD conducted in parallel a global consultation to gather additional feedback and further advance the process. Thirty-five responses were received through this consultation.

10. The electronic consultation showed that forty-six countries from different regions and fourteen international organizations are using (or planning to use) the CSA. There was general support among responding countries and organizations that CSA would become a global classification.

11. The large majority of responding countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the classification and gave positive feedback, while providing detailed comments to clarify some statistical areas and improve the explanatory notes. However, some respondents had concerns. These concerns mainly related to general issues, such as the type of the classification

(‘analytical classification’), treatment of the residual content, links with other statistical classifications and models, and uses of the CSA.

12. The CES strives for reaching a consensus on the materials that are presented for endorsement. Therefore, the Task Team considered important to address the concerns raised, and further improve the Classification so that it could be universally accepted.

#### IV. CURRENT WORK

13. The Task Team is currently adjusting the updated version of the Classification to take into account the comments from the electronic consultation as much as possible, without diverting too much from the proposal submitted to CES that was supported by a majority of countries. The Secretariat for this work is jointly provided by UNECE and UNSD.

14. The Task Team aims to keep the changes to the minimum as a large majority of the responding countries and organizations agreed with the version that was tabled in June, and had only minor comments on the classification or the explanatory notes. The Task Team also takes into account the general principles and best practices of statistical classifications, concerning for example the treatment of residuals, the coding of items in the classification, etc.

15. The main updates to the categories in the CSA 2.0 are summarised below:

##### *General updates:*

- a) Clarifications and improvement of explanatory notes for all domains;
- b) Adding residual categories to each domain and some subdomains for statistical areas that may have not been covered (‘[topic area] statistics not elsewhere classified’);
- c) Unifying the coding of statistical areas and sub-areas;
- d) Checking terminology (e.g. titles of statistical areas, use of the word ‘statistics’).

##### *Domain 1 ‘Social and demographic statistics’ – no major changes*

##### *Domain 2 ‘Economic statistics’:*

- a) Re-introducing a category of ‘Sectoral statistics’ with a breakdown into sectors at a lower level (like agriculture, energy, transport, etc.). In the version submitted to CES in June 2022 the sectors were elevated on a higher level to simplify the structure of the Domain 2. However, this approach was not supported by countries,
- b) Clarifying the financial statistics where there was some overlap in the previous draft;
- c) Better alignment with ISIC. At the same time, the CSA can not fully follow the structure of ISIC as it covers the statistical areas more widely than production activities, and some of the ISIC classes are in CSA under other domains (e.g. Domain 1 ‘Demographic and social statistics’).

*Domain 3 ‘Environment statistics’ – No major changes (except adding a residual category) to keep the breakdown in line with the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES).*

*Domain 4 ‘Governance statistics’ – this Domain received most polarised feedback from the consultation. A number of countries welcomed this area as a separate domain following the structure of the Praia Group Handbook on Governance Statistics. Some other countries asked for crime statistics to be classified under Domain 1 ‘Demographic and social statistics’. UNODC*

suggested a different structure for Domain 4. The Task Team discussed this thoroughly and decided to maintain the alignment with the *Praia Group Handbook*. However, to make crime statistics better visible in the CSA, it was decided to include ‘Crime’ explicitly as a subcategory under statistical area 4.8 ‘Safety and security’.

*Domain 5 ‘Cross-cutting statistics’:*

- a) ‘Gender and special population groups’ is split into two: ‘Gender’ and ‘Special population groups’;
- b) The category ‘Regional and small area statistics’ is brought back;
- c) A category ‘Social and solidarity economy’ is added.

*Domain 6 ‘Statistical infrastructure and methodology’* – the structure is improved, and some overlaps cleared up.

*Domain 7 ‘Strategic and managerial issues’* – no major changes.

16. The Task team also decided to make a list of issues for future consideration for inclusion in a possible new revision. Introducing these changes at this stage is too late as they have not been consulted with countries. One such example is food, including food security. It is currently covered in 2.3 ‘Agriculture, forestry and fisheries’. However, ‘food’ is much wider than its agricultural production, it has close links with health, poverty, food industry, food security, etc. It might merit a statistical area on its own under Domain 5 ‘Cross-cutting statistics’. Some other areas like that have been mentioned (such as oceans) but at this stage the Task team decided to leave the discussion on these issues for the next iteration of the Classification.

17. The CSA will have an accompanying note explaining in a more comprehensive way some basic notions around the Classification, such as its uses, its alignment with the *Best Practice Guidelines for Developing International Statistical Classification*<sup>2</sup>, why the principle of mutual exclusiveness is not followed, the limits of alignment with some international classifications and models (such as GSBPM, GAMS0, ISIC classification).

## V. NEXT STEPS

18. As decided by CES, CSA is planned to become a member of the International Family of Statistical Classifications.

19. The final updated CSA 2.0 will be submitted to the next meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications (UN CEISC) that will take place on 25-28 October 2022 in New York. The aim is that UN CEISC would then recommend it to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission for adoption.

20. Consequently, the custodianship of the CSA would be transferred to UNSD (as the Secretariat of the UN Statistical Commission) from the CES Bureau and UNECE.

21. The draft updated CSA 2.0 is planned to be submitted to the 2023 session of the UN Statistical Commission for adoption. For this purpose, the final documents have to be ready by end-November 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices/Best\\_practice\\_Nov\\_2013.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/bestpractices/Best_practice_Nov_2013.pdf)

**VI. REQUEST TO THE BUREAU**

- a) The Bureau is invited to take note of the progress since June 2022;**
- b) The Bureau is welcome to comment on the updating proposals and further steps.**