



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Overview of the process for updating international statistical classifications

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Introduction - UNCEISC

- ❑ [UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications \(UNCEISC\)](#)
 - Central coordination body for the work on international statistical classifications that are the responsibility of the Statistics Division,
 - Coordination and review of other international statistical classifications that are the responsibility of other international organizations and that have been proposed for adoption by the Statistical Commission.
- ❑ The Committee was previously known as the Expert Group on International Statistical Classifications. The Statistical Commission at its 52nd session in 2021 endorsed the new mandate and governance as proposed by the Expert Group and the change of name to the Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications. ([E/2021/24-E/CN.3/2021/30, Decision 52/113](#))
- ❑ The Statistical Commission at its 55th session in 2024 Endorsed the amended mandate and governance of the Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications to strengthen its role in overseeing the implementation of statistical classifications ([E/CN.3/2024/36, Decision 55/119](#))
- ❑ The Committee provides support to Principle 9 of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics - *“The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, **classifications** and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels”*



Key functions of the Committee

Assist and advise the Statistical Commission in:

- a) Promoting the adoption of best practices in the development of international statistical classifications;
- b) **Coordinating work on those classifications that are members of the International Family of Statistical Classifications, including examining changes to classifications and clarifying their relationship to other international statistical classifications;**
- c) Promoting the adoption of the classifications of the International Family of Statistical Classifications within regional and national statistical systems to improve the international comparability of data
- d) **Assessing the appropriateness of requests for inclusion of classifications into the International Family of Statistical Classifications**
- e) Ensuring that international statistical classifications are suitable for use in statistical and data activities in which they are to be applied and that they promote conceptual and methodological coherence, and best practice in the statistical system, as well as reflecting practical considerations in data collection and compilation;
- f) Developing a strategic approach towards the future development of the International Family of Statistical Classifications.



International Family of Classifications

- ❑ Covers broad statistical areas such as demographic and social statistics, economic statistics, environmental statistics, etc.
- ❑ Includes 143 classifications, as of end 2023, such as:
 - International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics 2016
 - International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) Revision
 - Classification of Environmental Purposes
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- ❑ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Family>
- ❑ Includes basic bibliographic information for each member classification, such as status, custodian, the year of its adoption, etc.

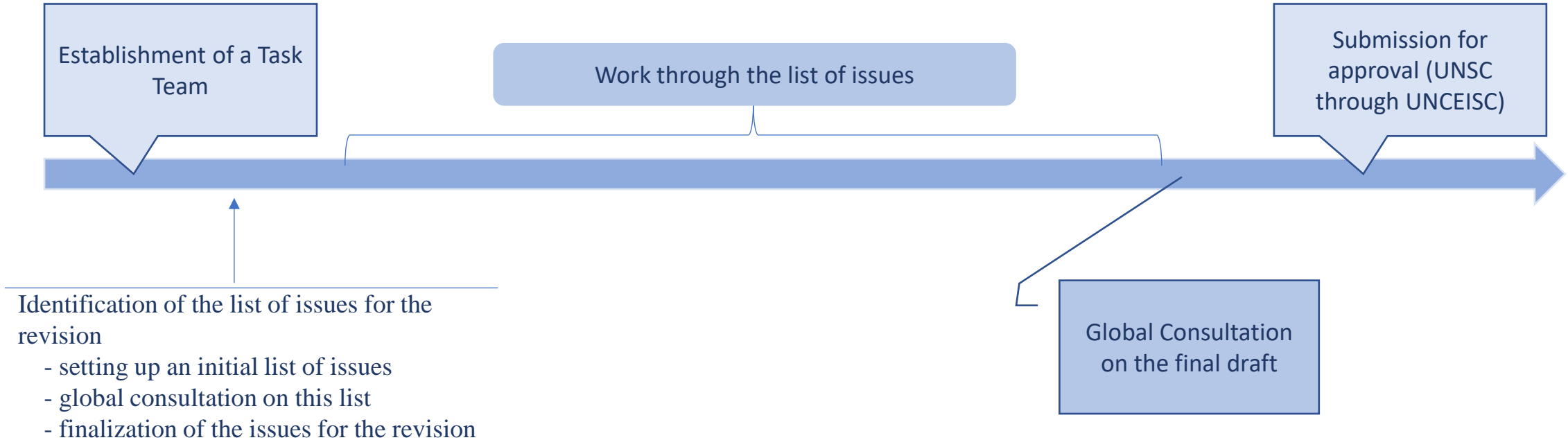


International Family of Classifications

- Serves as the repository of international statistical classifications adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission or other relevant intergovernmental bodies
- Maintained by the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications
- A set of grading criteria and a review process was established for adding new member classifications

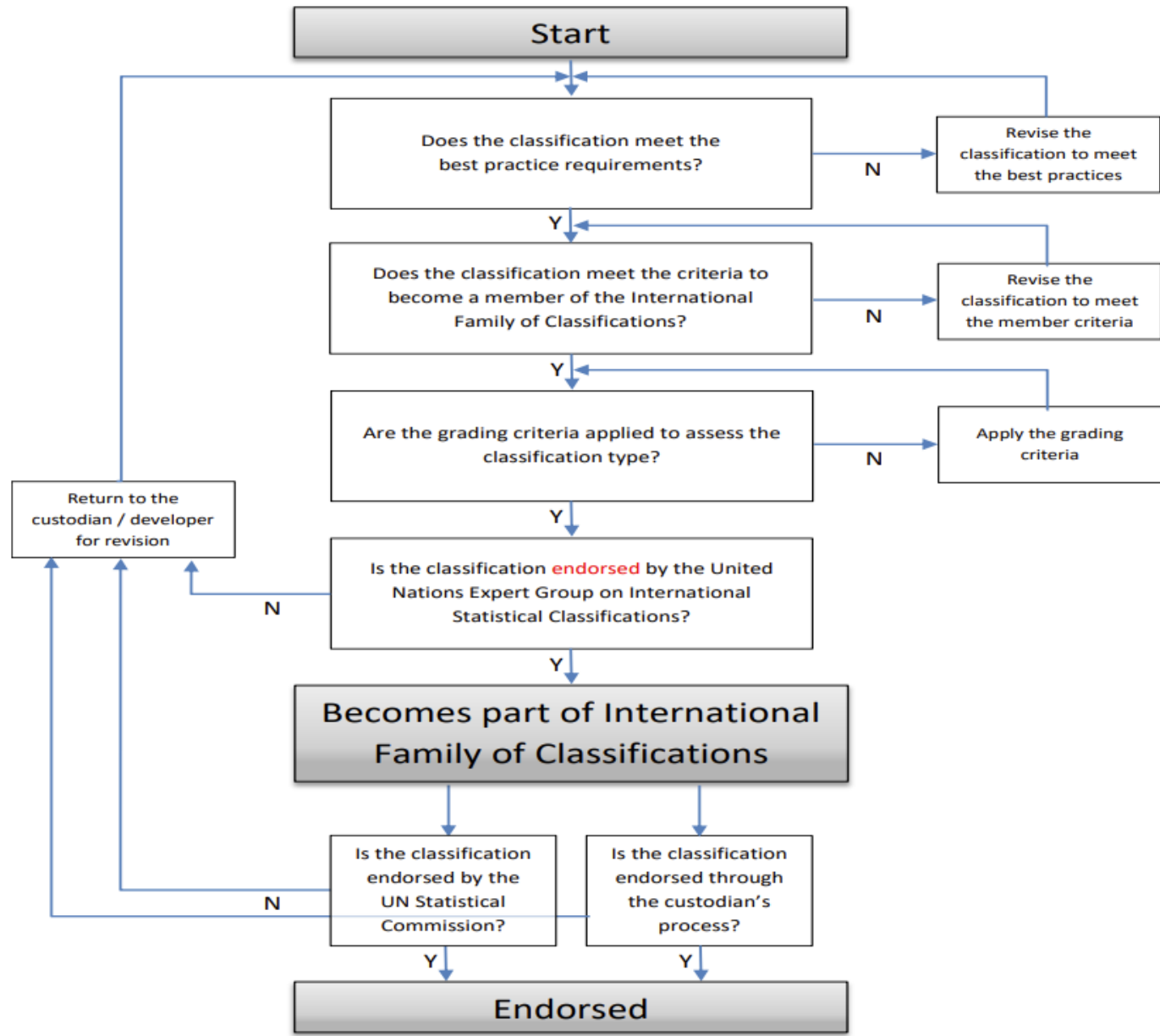


Typical process for the revision of classifications





Approval process





Best Practice Principles

- ❑ The Committee oversees the application of best practice principles in the development of international statistical classifications.

- ❑ Each international statistical classification must:
 - Have a consistent conceptual basis
 - Have a flat or hierarchic structure
 - Have categories that are mutually exclusive
 - Have definitions that are clear and unambiguous
 - Be up-to-date and relevant content
 - Last for a period of time
 - Meet user needs
 - Provide comparability over time and between collections

Approval Criteria Checklist

Criteria	Y/N	Comments
Custodian of the classification		There must be a custodian Mandatory ie must be Yes
Primary use of the classification		The use of the classification in statistical and non-statistical environments should be documented Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Conceptual basis		The major concepts that are used for developing the classification must be clearly defined and documented Mandatory ie must be Yes
Statistical Unit		The statistical units for the primary application of the classification have to be clearly identified Mandatory ie must be Yes
Scope of the classification		The scope of the classification must be clearly documented Mandatory ie must be Yes
Classification levels		The number of levels should be documented Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Classification categories		The classification categories must be precise and accurate, and mutually exclusive Mandatory ie must be Yes
Format of Classification codes		The code structure of the classification must be easy to understand Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Statistical Balance		The classification should be statistically balanced Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Consultation process		There should be full consultation with national users and national statistical offices Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Testing of the classification		The classification has been widely tested by users for suitability Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Correspondences		There must be correspondences between old and new versions, and related reference classifications Mandatory ie must be Yes
Implementation Plan		A clear and timetabled implementation plan is required Mandatory ie must be Yes
Maintenance Schedule		There should be a documented maintenance strategy Discretionary ie can be Yes or No
Dissemination		Guides, tools and other supporting material should be available for users Discretionary ie can be Yes or No



For revision of international statistical classifications that are the UNSD responsibility

- The Committee can decide if certain technical, analytical or exploratory tasks can be carried out by a suitable subgroup or task team?
- The Committee specifies the goals, tasks and lifespan of the subgroup or task team through a terms of reference
- The composition of the subgroup or task team is sourced from Committee members in the first instance and subject-matter experts from relevant agencies
- Interaction or alignment with other relevant task teams is sought to reduce duplication of effort
- The subgroup or task team must report back to the Expert Group for evaluation of their tasks and for approval of any findings or decisions.
- UNSD acts as Secretariat for the subgroup or task team



Current discussion on regular revision cycle for ISIC and CPC: Context

- Research agenda of the Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classification (CEISC): are revision cycles still needed in the traditional sense?
 - Optimal timing
 - Alignment between like classifications
 - Clarity of scope

- Inconsistency in revision cycles for all major international classifications on activity and product
 - CPC 1989, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2015, 2023/24
 - ISIC 1948, 1958, 1968, 1989, 2002, 2006, 2023

- Explore optimal timing of revision cycles for activity and product classification and their alignment

- The Statistical Commission at its 54th session in 2023 requested the Committee to formulate a proposal for a regular revision cycle of the ISIC and CPC



UNCEISC 2023 Recommendations

- Driven by the need to make the revision process more transparent and predictable and to ensure that the classifications reflect current conditions and support sound and informed decisions, the Committee recommended a **5-year revision cycle for the ISIC and CPC** to expedite the formulation of statistical responses to fast-evolving and emerging socioeconomic and environmental circumstances in a short timeframe.
- Took note that the revision cycle of ISIC and CPC may take into account of the following considerations:
 - Alignment with the update of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and other macro-economic standards, as appropriate
 - Alignment with the Harmonized System (HS) that have a regular 5-year revision cycle, as appropriate



Decisions from UNSC 2024 on regular revision cycle

The Statistical Commission:

Recommended more frequent revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification and the Central Product Classification so that they accurately mirror economic realities and aid in effective policymaking, **noted the recommendation by the Committee of a five-year revision cycle**, **acknowledged the concerns expressed about that frequency**, **noted the need for an adequate statistical infrastructure, concerted efforts and dedicated resources** to implement the recommendation, and **requested the Committee to propose and evaluate procedures, stages and milestones for implementing a regular revision cycle** for the International Standard Industrial Classification and the Central Product Classification, leading to the next revision, and to **report back to the Commission by 2028**



Recent discussion at the May 2024 UNCEISC meeting

- ❑ Discussed benefits of regular and frequent revisions: predictable schedules, consistent feedback process, maintained institutional memory, smaller scope of revisions, more relevant content
- ❑ Discussed concerns of more frequent revisions: financial and staffing resources, IT and other system updates, stability and maintenance of time-series data
- ❑ Noted the need to find a middle ground considering practicality and feasibility of implementing classification revisions while also ensuring that classifications remain relevant and up-to-date
- ❑ Recommended ISIC and CPC to be **synchronized** in their revision cycles, noting that there were discussions on whether the revision to be done in simultaneous or in sequential order
- ❑ **Tasked** the standing task team on ISIC and CPC to develop a more detailed proposal for a regular revision cycles for ISIC and for CPC

Thank you