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SDG4 Data validation process

Working Group 3: Data reporting,
validation and dissemination

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Introduction

This document outlines the steps, processes and timelines for the annual SDG4 indicator data validation process carried out jointly by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It was formally proposed to the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in January 2018 and accepted. The purpose of this document is to ensure a clear understanding between the various actors involved in producing the SDG4 indicators; as well as to clarify a process in which countries may choose to opt out of a thematic indicator if they so choose. In addition, it lays out the steps of this process separately for OECD and UIS countries, as they are slightly different.

Data validation and dissemination process – UIS countries

1) Launch of the Formal Education Survey (December YYYY)

Every year, UIS collects data on education in UIS countries. In order to collect the necessary data to report the SDG4 indicators UIS has added some elements to this data collection in order to align its Formal Education Survey to the needs of monitoring SDG 4 Agenda.

2) Submission of data (February YYYY + 1)

Ministries of Education (MoEs) and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) submit the completed Formal Education Survey back to UIS.

3) Review of the raw data (starting from March YYYY + 1)

UIS reviews the raw data that has been sent by the MoEs and NSOs, consulting with them when necessary.

4) SDG4 review – all Tier 1 indicators (starting from June YYYY + 1)

At this time, UIS will send a data validation package to MoEs and NSO in each country.

For UIS countries, the data validation package includes:

- A metadata document – this document provides information on definitions and the formulas used to calculate the indicators.
- SDG4 file – this spreadsheet lays out the source data and, where necessary, the calculations for the global indicators. This spreadsheet would include any information regarding the measures used to populate the indicator for any assessment; i.e. what level is used from the assessment instrument.
- Country Review file – this spreadsheet provides both raw data and the formula files that are used to calculate the thematic indicators.

With these three elements, MoEs and NSOs are in a good position to assess the quality of the data feeding the indicator; as the flow of indicator production from raw data to calculated indicator is fully transparent. At this point in the process, a country may choose to opt out of a thematic indicator if they decide it is not relevant for their context.

- 5) UIS database release (all indicators) (September YYYY + 1)

Validated indicators are then published to the UIS database, meaning they are ready to be used widely for publication.

- 6) UN Statistical Division (UNSD) release (July YYYY + 2)

Data are fully disseminated through the UNSD.

Data validation and dissemination process – OECD countries¹

- 1) UOE data collection launch (June YYYY)

Every year, the OECD collects data on education in OECD countries through the UOE data collection.

- 2) Submission of data (September YYYY – December YYYY)

MoEs and NSOs from OECD countries submit data collected through the UOE data collection during this time period.

- 3) Review of the raw data (October YYYY – January YYYY + 1)

OECD and Eurostat review the data collection, consulting with the MoEs and NSOs when necessary.

- 4) SDG4 Review (starting from June – YYYY + 1)

At this time, UIS will send a data validation package for the SDG4 indicators to national focal points (in MoEs and NSOs) in each country.

For OECD countries, the data validation package includes:

- A metadata document
- SDG4 file – for global indicators, see above and
- The country review file – for thematic indicators, see above.

At this point in the process a country may communicate back to UIS and OECD that it would like to opt out of a thematic indicator.

- 5) Publication of *Education at a Glance* (September YYYY + 1)

Some SDG data collected during the reference period will be published in *Education at a Glance*. The content of this chapter is decided by the members of the Working Party. Note: OECD does not publish an SDG database.

- 6) UIS database release (all indicators) (September YYYY + 1)

¹ UOE data collection: UIS/OECD/Eurostat

Validated indicators are then published to the UIS database, meaning they are ready to be used widely for publication.

- 7) UN Statistical Division (UNSD) release (July YYYY + 2)

Data are fully disseminated through the UNSD.

Opting out of thematic indicators

In some cases a country may decide that publishing data for a given thematic indicator could be misleading as that indicator is not relevant or appropriate for the country. This should be communicated back to UIS or the OECD during the indicators review (see above). At this time a country should provide UIS or the OECD with the reasons why the indicator is not relevant for that country.

The issue of opting out should be approached with caution for the following reasons:

- 1) When indicators are related, it is confusing for data users when one indicator is published while another one that is closely related is not
- 2) A lack of capacity or data limitations should not be a reason to 'opt out' – these cases should be treated as missing.
- 3) When a country has a disagreement over the value of the indicator, this should then lead to a discussion about the appropriateness of the methodology; it should not be a reason for opting out.

Note that further instructions and information for opting out will be discussed at the TCG meeting in Mexico City in November 2018.