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**Development Co-operation Directorate  
Development Assistance Committee**

## **DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics**

### **Introduction of a data field in the CRS for tracking cross-cutting COVID-19 related expenditures and other possible topics of interest**

The WP-STAT meeting of 22-25 June 2020 examined options to enable the tracking of COVID-19 related activities in the CRS, both in the health sector and in other sectors [DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)21, section 4]. This note further develops one of the options presented at the WP-STAT on the creation of a data field in the CRS for tracking cross-cutting COVID-19 related expenditures and other possible areas of interest. The note takes into consideration the comments received at the meeting and a room document presented by Canada on this subject [DCD/DAC/STAT/RD(2020)4].

This note is presented for APPROVAL under the written procedure on a non-objection basis, with a deadline of 23 October 2020.

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# Introduction of a data field in the CRS for tracking cross-cutting COVID-19 related expenses and other topics of interest

## Introduction

1. Development finance providers have been supporting developing countries in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, starting from early 2020. The OECD launched a special survey in April-May 2020 to collect first information on the development cooperation actions being undertaken by all providers. The survey confirmed that many DAC members, other bilateral providers, multilateral institutions and philanthropic foundations had reoriented their 2020 development co-operation programmes and pledged new funds to contribute to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Support included both actions to strengthen the health care and actions to support economic and social recovery from the consequences of the pandemic and actions at the global level to pave the way for International Public Goods<sup>1</sup>.
2. The DAC statistical system is key to provide the evidence on providers' development cooperation response to the COVID-19 pandemic as it ensures that data are reported in a transparent and comparable fashion. The existing reporting standard however does not permit to identify COVID-19 related expenses separately.
3. Noting this exceptional situation, the WP-STAT meeting of 22-25 June 2020 examined options for tracking COVID-19 related activities in the CRS, both in the health sector and in other sectors [DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)21, section 4]. The options presented consisted in 1) the addition of a purpose code in the health sector and 2) the identification of COVID-19 related activities in other sectors with a new dedicated field, or through the insertion of keywords in the title or description fields. The WP-STAT also emphasised the importance of a quick decision on this topic, so that activities being implemented in 2020 could be unequivocally reported in the 2021 reporting cycle on 2020 data.
4. In order to track COVID-19 activities in the health sector a separate note, for approval under the written procedure [DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)36], proposes the addition of a specific COVID-19 code within the health sector.
5. This note develops the proposal to introduce a new dedicated data field to identify cross-cutting COVID-19 related activities in all sectors. The note takes into consideration the comments members made at the meeting and the room document presented by Canada on this subject [DCD/DAC/STAT/RD(2020)4].
6. The proposal (paragraphs 13-17 and Table 2) is presented to the WP-STAT for APPROVAL under the written procedure on a non-objection basis, with a deadline of **23 October 2020**. If approved, the

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<sup>1</sup> The report on the survey is available under the reference DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)35

amendments included in the Annex I will be incorporated in the Reporting Directives and enter into force in 2021, for the data collection on 2020 activities.

## Tracking cross-cutting COVID-19 related activities in the CRS

7. Cross-cutting objectives are tracked in the CRS through the policy markers and through the SDG focus field. A recent review of the Rio and policy markers concluded that most of the markers are widely used, but before an eventual introduction of new markers, a simplification of the system should be envisaged given that reporting on policy markers has reached considerable complexity, both for reporters and for the Secretariat<sup>2</sup>. The SDG focus field was introduced in 2019 beginning with the data collection on 2018 activities. The majority of DAC members as well as a number of non-DAC providers reported SDG information, but the SDG field is not relevant with regards to COVID-19 tracking.

8. The WP-STAT meeting in June 2020 discussed the following options to track COVID-19 related activities:

- i. Use keywords<sup>3</sup> in the existing text fields (title and description), without making modifications to the Reporting Directives.
- ii. Add a new field with a dedicated COVID-19 policy marker.
- iii. Add a new field to collect keywords to initially track COVID-19 related activities, which could be expanded to cover other topics whenever necessary.

9. During the discussion, a majority of members leaned towards the introduction of a new dedicated field to track COVID-19 related activities, either through a new policy marker, a flag or a keywords field. The possibility to introduce keywords in the existing text field, although preferred by some members, was considered unfeasible by some others. Furthermore, the use of an existing text field would make standardisation of the COVID-19 identifier difficult and the retrieval of information less efficient.

10. The introduction of a new keyword field presents some advantages with respect to the introduction of a new policy maker, notably:

- Policy markers have been generally slow to approve and implement.
- The CRS now includes twelve policy markers and several members expressed the desire not to increase this number further.
- A keyword field could be used as an adjustable, multiple-purpose “policy marker”, while a policy marker field is an instrument that tracks only one subject at a time.

11. A keywords field will require a decision on how the list of keywords will be managed. Keywords systems can work either through a ‘spontaneous’, bottom-up classification system (also called folksonomy) or through a list of allowed keywords, which are centrally managed. Bottom-up classification systems guarantee total freedom to reporters to tag their activities; they are particularly useful to highlight key issues when a large diversity of actors and activities is present but are not well suited for the production of statistics. Conversely, a centrally managed list of keywords allows a precise definition of each keyword and is able to produce consistent statistical measures, but it needs a certain co-ordination effort, through a body such as the WP-STAT.

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<sup>2</sup> See DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)27.

<sup>3</sup> In the context of this paper, there is no functional difference between a “keyword” and a “hashtag”. They are both strings of text made of one (or few) word(s), which indicate a peculiar characteristic of the activity. Hashtags are simply keywords prefixed by the “#” character.

12. For communication purposes, data and analysis are often published using hashtags to connect stories with similar topics. Hashtags are keywords preceded by the # symbol. Some members use hashtags to identify specific topics in their activities. To assure the maximum flexibility in the data collection, the keyword field could be configured to accept also keywords preceded by the hashtag sign. The keyword field could use a commonly agreed hashtag to consolidate different keywords submitted to a unique output.

## The proposal

13. This note proposes **to add a new voluntary ‘keyword’ field in the CRS to collect keywords. The field will be dedicated initially to track COVID-19 related activities and could be later expanded to other mutually agreed themes.**

14. **The proposed keyword field would have the following characteristics:**

- The keywords field is a text field. It can accommodate a series of keywords, preceded or not by hashtags, separated by a semicolon “;”.
- All activities reported could be tagged, regardless of their purpose code, development co-operation modality, channel or other characteristic.
- For the initial data collection (in 2021 on 2020 activities), keywords will be limited to track COVID-19 related activities. These could be indicated using a dedicated hashtag #COVID-19 or a series of related keywords in use in national systems (such as COVID, COVID-pandemic, Sars-CoV-2, etc.). Members should inform the Secretariat on what keywords they are reporting to track COVID-19 expenditures when submitting their data.
- To ensure that all COVID-19 related data are easily identifiable, the Secretariat will consolidate the different COVID-19 keywords submitted under the unique “#COVID-19” hashtag. The Secretariat will maintain a lookup table, published on the community site, listing the different keywords submitted and the corresponding hashtag (see Table 1 as an example). The Secretariat will publish data using exclusively the consolidated “#COVID-19” hashtag.

**Table 1 - Lookup table example**

Keywords reported to the Secretariat (input)	Corresponding hashtag used in CRS statistics (output)
COVID-19	#COVID-19
#COVID-19	
COVID-Sars	
COVID-Pandemic	
Sars-CoV-2	
#COVID	
Etc.	

15. **It is further proposed to adopt a common definition for the keyword COVID-19, to identify activities dedicated to COVID-19 preparedness, control and response as their principal objective (table 2).** The COVID-19 pandemic has a profound impact on all sectors of the economy and as well on a large array of development co-operation activities. Focusing the COVID-19 keyword on activities that have the principal objective of supporting COVID-19 control and recovery will result in figures that will measure more precisely the development finance dedicated exclusively to COVID-19. As customary, members have the faculty of reporting large projects in two lines, if they wish to apply the COVID-19 keyword to only a part of the funding.

16. The definitions included in the 'keyword definitions table' (table 2) apply to the activities reported directly with the #COVID-19 hashtag and to all the related keywords indicated in the lookup table (table 1).

**Table 2 –Keyword definitions table, 2020.**

Keyword	Description	Eligibility criteria	Notes
(#)COVID-19	Activities tagged #COVID-19 have the principal objective of supporting control of the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to its socio-economic impacts.	Activities marked with #COVID-19 would not have taken place if not for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.  All activities are eligible to be tagged regardless of their co-operation modality, channel or purpose code.	All activities marked with the purpose code 12664 "COVID-19 control" will be tagged by default with #COVID-19.

17. **As a second step, to expand the keyword field to other areas, it is proposed that:**

- **The Secretariat creates and maintains a “keyword definitions table”** containing the list and definitions of all keywords/hashtags whose use was agreed among members. The 'keyword definitions table' will be included as an annex to the Reporting Directives.
- **The 'keyword definitions table' will be updated yearly.** Members will be invited to propose edits to the 'keyword definitions table' at the beginning of each year. Following a first informal discussion among WP-STAT members, the Secretariat will propose amendments to the table for approval at the formal WP-STAT meeting, or through a written procedure on a non-objection basis. The edits approved to the 'keyword definitions table' will enter into force the year following the approval, unless members decide otherwise.

## Annex I - Edits to the Reporting Directives

If the proposal contained in the paragraphs 13-17 and table 2 is approved, the Secretariat will edit the Reporting Directives as indicated in this Annex.

*In the Reporting Directives, chapter 4, insert a new Section VI with the title “Keyword field”. The following section ‘Tying status’ would be renumbered as Section VII.*

### **Section VI – Keyword field**

#### *Concept*

The keywords field is a text field used collect keywords. Keywords are short strings of text that signal that the activity corresponds to an agreed definition, such as pursuing a specific policy objective or having a certain intrinsic characteristic.

The keyword field accepts both keywords and hashtags (keywords prefixed by the symbol #). Members agree on the definition of hashtags in the ‘keyword definitions table’ published as Annex 20 of the Statistical Directives.

Members can report using the agreed hashtags or with keywords that have the same definition, but might be written with alternate spelling or in another language. The Secretariat maintains a lookup table (published in the community space) that links the agreed hashtag with a list of corresponding keywords submitted by members.

The Secretariat consolidates all submitted keywords to a corresponding hashtag, prior to data publication.

By default, keywords could be associated with any activity reported in the CRS database. The ‘keyword definitions table’ could restrict the application of a specific hashtag to a subset of activities.

Reporting keywords is voluntary.

#### *Structure*

An activity can be associated with one or more of the agreed hashtags, or to keywords with the same definitions that adopt an alternate spelling or language.

#### *Governance*

The ‘keyword definitions table’ included in Annex 20 is revised annually. Members can propose edits to the table, which will be adopted by consensus. Modifications to the ‘keyword definitions table’ will enter into force in the calendar year immediately following the year of approval, unless members decide otherwise.

*In the Reporting Directives – Section III. CRS++ item-level reporting – III.1 Principles of reporting in CRS++ paragraph 389 should be edited as follows.*

(edits are highlighted in blue): Section C requests supplementary data and includes long descriptions which permit checking the accuracy and consistency of purpose coding and verifying the ODA-eligibility of activities (developmental objective); it also includes information on the SDG focus, policy objective markers and keywords, which permit analyses of cross-sectoral issues.

*In the Reporting Directives – Section III.CRS++ item-level reporting, III.1 Principles of reporting in CRS++, table 5 should be edited to include the keyword field.*

*In the Reporting Directives – Section III.CRS++ item-level reporting, III.2 Instructions for reporting in CRS++, insert after paragraph 374 (SDG field) table and the following text:*

19c Keywords	Indicate keywords that can be applied to the activity, choosing between the agreed list in Annex 20. Keywords with alternate spelling, but the same definition could be used.
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The keywords field is a voluntary field dedicated to collect keywords. Keywords are short strings of text, signalling that the activity corresponds the characteristics indicated in the 'keywords definitions table' (see Annex 20) such as pursuing a specific policy objective or having certain intrinsic characteristic. The 'keyword definition table' lists all approved keywords and their respective definitions. Members can submit data using approved hashtags, or keywords with alternate spelling but with the same definition.

*In the Annex 3 of the Reporting Directives*

**Add a line** for the keyword field in table “Summary of reporting in CRS++” of Annex 3 (Summary of instructions in CRS++ and examples), after field 19b. Description

**Add a line** for the keyword field in table “Examples of reporting in CRS++” of Annex 3 (Summary of instructions in CRS++).

*In the Annex 4 of the Reporting Directives*

**Add keyword field** to Annex 4 (CRS++ items required for different resources flows)

**Add Annex 20** – Keyword definitions table.

Reporters can apply the keywords included in the following table or corresponding keywords with alternate spelling but which have the same definition.

Keyword	Description	Eligibility criteria	Notes
(#)COVID-19	Activities tagged with (#)COVID-19 have the principal objective of supporting control of the COVID-19 pandemic and response to its socio-economic impacts.	Activities marked with (#)COVID-19 would not have taken place if not for response to the COVID-19 pandemics.  All activities are eligible to be tagged regardless of their co-operation modality, channel or purpose code.	All activities marked with the purpose code 12664 “COVID-19 control” would be by default tagged with the hashtag #COVID-19

*Renumber the current Annex 20 — ‘Programme-based approaches: examples’ as Annex 21.*

*Renumber the current Annex 21 — ‘Reporting methods for private sector instruments’ as Annex 22*