



**UNSPSC – Past, Present and Future
January 18, 2002**

UNSPSC™ – United Nations Standard Products and Services Code – is a global standard for classification of products and services. It helps facilitate international commerce and supports procurement organizations' spend analysis and supplier sourcing efforts. The primary users and sponsors of the UNSPSC are generally corporations that are actively building electronic commerce capabilities. UNSPSC is a trademark of the United Nations/UNDP.

Past

The UNSPSC is based on the SPSC, a classification code for products and services, which Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) began to develop in 1994, and the United Nations Common Coding System (UNCCS), a similar code created by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In 1998, D&B signed a memorandum of understanding with UNDP regarding the SPSC and UNCCS, which provided the following:

- A formal agreement between UNDP and D&B to create and promote a single, open system for universal classification of goods and services – the UNSPSC; and
- The recognition that the copyright in the resulting code—UNSPSC—belongs exclusively to the United Nations/UNDP.

After completing work on the first few versions of the UNSPSC, UNDP and D&B mutually decided that the UNSPSC should be administered by an independent third party. In order to launch the UNSPSC expeditiously, UNDP entered an agreement with ECCMA in 1999 to provide maintenance and management services for the operation of the UNSPSC. ECCMA was founded by a former consultant to D&B and initially enjoyed D&B's funding and the support of UNDP and D&B.

Following a review of the implementation of the UNSPSC, in February 2001, UNDP made the decision to terminate its relationship with ECCMA and to submit the services for the maintenance, update and management of the UNSPSC to a competitive bidding process in accordance with its Financial Regulations and Rules. Prior to soliciting bids, UNDP, with the help of UNSPSC users, defined the key characteristics that a successful bidder would need to possess. None of the bids received was successful, as compliance with those set requirements had not been met.

Present

Beginning October 1, 2001, D&B was appointed temporary manager of the UNSPSC for a period of six months, while UNDP continues its search for a long-term manager. Parties interested in obtaining and/or updating the most recent version of the UNSPSC should visit www.un-spsc.net. Anyone can download the UNSPSC, free of charge. Registration – also free of charge – is required for those who wish to participate in the updating of the UNSPSC.

Future

UNDP and D&B are committed to ensuring that the UNSPSC becomes the world's preeminent products and services classification system. UNDP is also committed to continuing to protect its rights in the UNSPSC. UNDP's goal is to promote global commerce, breaking down language barriers and helping developing countries to enter international markets more readily. D&B's goal is to ensure that a robust, globally accepted UNSPSC will help businesses generate efficiencies within their procurement operations. With these goals in mind, future UNSPSC initiatives will include:

- Continuous improvement of data quality controls – ensuring that redundant, ambiguous and/or ill-categorized codes are not included in the code set of the UNSPSC.
- Comprehensive architecture review – providing the basis for sound high-level organization of the UNSPSC as it expands to cover additional products and services.
- Professional foreign language translation – breaking down any language barriers that impede trade.
- Complete version control – enabling ease of update from one version of the UNSPSC to the next and providing forward and backward compatibility between all UNSPSC versions.