

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint Task Team on Communication

1. Background

1. The Joint Task Team (TT) on Communication was established by the UN Committee of Experts on national accounts represented by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) and the Advisory Expert Group on national accounts (AEG), the IMF's Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics (BOPCOM), and the IMF's Government Finance Statistics Advisory Committee (GFSAC) to contribute to the work related to revising the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA), in coordination with the update of the IMF's Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, sixth edition (BPM6), and the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014 (GFSM 2014).

2. On November 2018, the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts (AEG) reconfirmed the three priority areas for the SNA research agenda and identified specific issues to be taken forward in the short term within those areas¹. At the 13th meeting of the AEG members agreed to add a 4th priority area – communication which focus on potential updates to SNA terminology and presentation. At its 51st session, the Statistical Commission (UNSC) welcomed the establishment of a TT on communication to develop a more user-friendly terminology, communication about the revision cycle and sharing of research results, and compliance with SNA recommendations.²

3. The terminology and presentation of macroeconomic statistics has a significant impact on how the data are interpreted and used by governments, researchers and students, businesses, media, and citizens. Macroeconomic statistics should be presented and communicated in such a way that the full extent of its analytical usefulness, its quality, its scope, comparability through time and across countries, and policy applications are maximized. Given the importance in maintaining consistency between macroeconomic accounting frameworks and related statistical frameworks there is a need to coordinate this work across the various statistical domains. The Joint TT on Communication will oversee the development of recommendations and tools aimed at improving the way macroeconomic statistics and accounts are communicated and presented to a diverse set of users.

¹ See the 2018 AEG conclusions at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/aeg/2018/M12_Conclusions.pdf.

² See the report of the 51st session at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/Report-2020-Draft-EE.pdf>.

2. Overall coordination

4. For updates related to the SNA, the UNSD is responsible for the overall coordination between the (joint) TTs and their work streams. It facilitates the exchange of information between the TTs and strives to align the work plans as appropriate. For this purpose, it participates in the coordination meetings of the individual TTs and calls for overall coordination meetings involving the co-chairs and the secretariats of all the TTs at strategic points in time, depending on the planning and the progress. In support of the coordination, UNSD provides an online wiki platform for the various TTs to connect and work collaboratively, post background documents, and collect contributions from the members of the TTs for discussion and review. Similarly, for updates related to the BPM this coordination role is undertaken by the Balance of Payments Task Team which reports to the Balance of Payments Committee.

3. Activities

5. The activities of the Joint TT on communication will be carried out under 5 work streams (Joint sub-Task Teams):

- **Development of collaborative compilers hubs that could include digital versions of the SNA, BPM, GFS and MFS and related handbooks and guides as well as a discussion forum, collaborative space to share tools, a compilers contact area, and a research corner.** This will include interlinkages to other macroeconomic accounting collaborative sites such SEEA.
- **Digitalization of the SNA, BPM, GFS, MFS, and related manuals, handbooks, and guides.** This will include the definition of the functionality, layout, and rules of the digitalization of the documents, for the responsible agencies to use a harmonized and interlinked approach when digitalizing the documents. To foster a consistent implementation across statistical domains, the work developed can be considered when digitalizing other macroeconomic accounts manuals. This work stream should coordinate with the work stream responsible for the development of the collaborative compilers' hub and with the SDMX initiative, to ensure that the technical requirements are compatible and the development of the search across domains will function as requested.
- **Conducting a broad review of macroeconomic statistics terminology and “branding” and the development, where appropriate, of complementary terms that better convey the meaning and interpretation of the definition, concept and data to users.** The focus of this sub-group will be to foster the comparability, consistency, and understanding of macroeconomic accounts by users, as well as review the overall SNA “branding”, including the way the versions of the macroeconomic statistical manuals are labelled and the language used to label what is currently referred to as accounts, tables, satellite accounts, etc. The task will be developed in a glossary type framework, using as a starting point the glossary included in the various manuals and the questions frequently

asked to the international organizations and additional input from countries. The objective is not to change the concepts, but to identify alternative terms for more consistent and accurate use in the communication with non-experts, including the general public, and assess if additional efforts are needed to communicate with more sophisticated users, such as policy makers. The work stream will coordinate with the other TTs, in particular with the TT on well-being and sustainability, regarding the terminology of core, satellite, and extended accounts.

- **Development of a taxonomy that describes the macroeconomic accounts compilation process including steps such as revisions, benchmarking, or vintages of data.** The focus of this work stream will be to provide guidance to improve the consistency and transparency when communicating issues such as major revisions in macroeconomic account series. The objective is to identify and agree upon the use of terms and definitions used in the data production process (e.g., types of revisions, different data vintages, backcasted series). This work stream will build on and reference to material currently available.
- **A review of the assessment framework used to measure alignment with the international macroeconomic accounting standards and, if required, to propose guidance that considers the evolution of macroeconomic accounting since the last vintage of updates.** The focus of this work stream will be to create clear measures on the degree of implementation and alignment with the international standards (e.g., charts, tables, quantitative indicators), taking into consideration that the priority recommendations differ according to national conditions, and that the implementation of the latest version of the standards is not by itself a measure of accuracy. The work will build on existing frameworks such as the set of minimum required data tables and the compliance questionnaire for monitoring the *2008 SNA* implementation, adopted by the UNSC.

6. It is expected that each of the work streams would be carried out by separate joint sub-TTs comprising selected members of the various participating Committees such as the ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAC, UNCEEA, UNCEBTS, Committee of Experts on price statistics represented by the ISWGPS, the Committee of Experts on agriculture and rural statistics represented by the IAEG on AG, and International Classification. See overview of the working arrangements below.

4. Composition

7. Sanjiv Mahajan (Office of National Statistics, United Kingdom) and (tbd) will co-chair the joint TT on Communication. They will be supported by the International Monetary Fund, UNSD and World Bank, which will assume the secretariat of the joint TT. The steering group (co-chairs, secretariats and country chairs of the workstreams (sub-TTs)) would be responsible for coordination between the work streams.

8. The co-chairs, the secretariats and chairs of the various workstreams will decide on the size and composition of the contributions to the workstreams. They will organize and align the work and establish a detailed work programme and timetable that takes into account the milestones for each work stream.

9. The co-chairs of the joint TT, the secretariats, and the chairs of each workstream will recruit other members of the TTs, normally including other Committee members, experts from international organizations as well as other experts (e.g., from national statistical agencies, central banks, national or local governments, the research community, the media), according to the necessary expertise (e.g., Balance of Payments, Government Finance Statistics, Monetary and Financial Statistics, Environmental Economic Accounting, and Communication). The selection of the members will take into account representativeness (range of regions, country sizes, and stage of statistical development) and the need to coordinate with Committees responsible for other domains.

10. The co-chairs and the members of the joint sub TTs will work on a voluntary basis.

5. Organization of work

11. The ToRs of each of the workstreams (presented in Annex 1-5) follows a common structure where the issue and objective are described, the background research is presented, and recommended deliverables and timeline are presented.

12. The working arrangements are expected to consist mainly of electronic communication through the circulation of documentation, web-based data and code hosting services like GitHub, and the collection of comments on specific topics. Face-to-face meetings could be organized if necessary.

6. Reporting

13. Progress of work on the five workstreams will be reported to the respective participating Committees like the Committee of Experts on national accounts, represented by the ISWGNA and AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAC, UNCEEA, UNCEBTS and International Classification and where applicable also the United Nations Statistical Commission.

7. Deliverables and timelines

14. Details of the deliverables and timelines for each of the 5 workstreams is included in the individual ToRs included in the Annexes.

Overview of the workstreams of the Joint Communication Task Team					
Co-chairs: Sanjiv Mahajan and (tbd) (related to matters of the Committee of Experts on national accounts, represented by the ISWGNA and AEG)					
Secretariat: IMF, UNSD& WB					
Workstreams	Review of macroeconomic accounting terminology and “branding”	Development of a taxonomy of the macroeconomic accounting compilation process	Review of the assessment framework used to measure alignment with the macroeconomic accounting statistical standards	Development of a Collaborative Hubs for Compilers of economic statistics	Digitalization of the macroeconomic accounting manuals and related materials
Organisation	Joint sub-Task Team	Joint sub-Task Team	Joint sub-Task Team	Joint sub-Task Team	Joint sub-Task Team
Reporting	ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAG, MFSMAG	ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAG, MFSMAG	ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAG, MFSMAG	ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAG, MFSMAG	ISWGNA/AEG, BOPCOM, GFSAG, MFSMAG, ICEG, UNCEBST, UNCEEEA
Chair	Sanjiv Mahajan and (tbd)	Sanjiv Mahajan and (tbd)	Sanjiv Mahajan and (tbd)	tbd	tbd
Secretariat:	IMF & WB	IMF & WB	IMF & WB	IMF & UNSD	UNSD