

Agenda item : V
: The development of training material on the SNA

Introduction

Assessments undertaken by the UNSD of the level of implementation of the 1993 SNA and the regional consultations undertaken by the member organizations of the ISWGNA identified *insufficient training* for national accounts compilers as one of the key impediments to the successful implementation of the SNA for countries with less advanced statistical systems. The 2008 SNA implementation strategy as endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-ninth session, therefore, gives greater emphasis to training and technical cooperation to meet the challenges of national accounts development in countries with less advanced statistical systems and also to help institutional capacity building and development of data sources. To use the available resources as effective as possible, training activities of international organizations and national initiatives need to be coordinated to the extent possible. The ISWGNA should also pursue the development of standardized training materials on the 2008 SNA, on the supporting statistical production process (such as classifications, statistical methods, statistical business registers, survey and administrative sources, integration, dissemination and communication) and on the supporting organisation and management issues (such as legislative and operational frameworks and coordination and governance).

Guidance on documentation provided

The attached document contains more detailed information on the development of training material related to the implementation of the SNA, the supporting statistical production process, and provides information on a centralised knowledge platform that will be updated and maintained to facilitate coordination of activities across ISWGNA organisations.

Main issues to be discussed

The AEG is requested to:

- Provide guidance on the topics and format of training to be provided;
- Express views on the training material that needs to be developed for a knowledgebase on training material; and
- Express views on the mechanisms to assure coordination of training activities among international and regional agencies.

7th Meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, 23-25 April 2012, New York**I. Introduction**

1. The ISWGNA recognizes that it is essential to conduct training and technical cooperation in a coordinated way to facilitate the speedy implementation of the SNA. For this purpose the ISWGNA pursues the development of standardised training materials on the 2008 SNA and supporting classifications, statistical registers and basic economic statistics. However, it is recognized that this initiative is resource intensive and may take some time to produce.

2. The first steps of this initiative are the publication of *Essential SNA: Building the basics* (Eurostat, 2010), the development of e-learning courses on national accounts, part of the World Bank's Virtual Statistical System and the IMF's 2008 SNA training material. These initiatives can also be accessed from a centralised knowledge platform established on the 2008 SNA implementation website. In addition, the *Knowledge Base on Economic Statistics – Methods and Country Practises* also provide country practises on economic statistics and national accounts as well as training material available at the country level.

3. The training programmes provided by the ISWGNA members are implemented mainly through the organization of meetings, training seminars, and workshops on organization and management, national accounts compilation and basic statistics (including economic, environment and financial statistics) as well as their application for evidence based policy formulation. To facilitate coordination to ensure that the various initiatives by international agencies do not overlap the ISWGNA members report on various training activities and update this list on an annual basis. The various agencies can use the list as a reference point for undertaking new initiatives.

4. This issues paper comprises three sections. Following the introduction in the first section an overview of the main training initiatives by the ISWGNA members is presented in section II. Issues for consideration by the AEG are provided in section III

II. Training material

5. This section provides an overview of the main initiatives by the ISWGNA members.

(a) *Essential SNA: Building the Basics*

6. Eurostat has developed an interactive e-course “Essential SNA: Building the Basics” that presents the main concepts of the System of National Accounts contained in Eurostat's Handbook “Essential SNA: Building the Basics”. The handbook proposes an approach to the implementation of the SNA in developing countries. It consists of the gradual compilation of the accounts and tables that are relevant for addressing policy issues and are considered to be of the highest priority. For this purpose, the main reference framework is the Minimum Requirement Data Set developed by the ISWGNA. The e-learning modules are presented in hypertext that is tailor-made for online use with a very clear structure that is easy to navigate. The modules are complemented by exercises and a glossary and comprise a media gallery for each chapter providing access to interesting web pages and further readings. More

information on this initiative is provided in the background document SNA/M1.12/5.3 Eurostat – Essential SNA.

(b) The Virtual Statistical System

7. The Virtual Statistical System (VSS) developed by the World Bank is a freely available online resource for national statistical offices, other data producing agencies, as well as data users. It provides in-depth information on how effective statistical systems/organizations operate and the essential knowledge prerequisites for official statisticians working in these organizations. In addition to a knowledge base, the VSS has a library of e-learning courses on selected topics, including on national accounts (<https://www.virtualstatisticalsystem.org/>). More information on this initiative is provided in the background document SNA/M1.12/5.2 World Bank – Virtual Statistical System.

(c) SNA training by the IMF

8. IMF has a long experience in conducting training courses on national accounts statistics, ranging from a six-week 2008 SNA course offered periodically at the IMF Institute in Washington, D.C. to two-week courses on basic national accounts and two-week courses on quarterly GDP through its regional training centres. The most recent offering is a course for users of macroeconomic statistics presented for the first time at the Singapore Training Institute, one of a group of regional training facilities associated with the IMF Institute. The IMF intends to convert some of these training materials, particularly that focusing on GDP compilation within the 2008 SNA framework, into a format that can be published on the external website so that national accounts compilers at large can use them for their self-education.

(d) UNSD initiatives

9. The training programmes provided by the UNSD on national accounts and supporting economic statistics are implemented mainly through the organization of meetings, training seminars, and workshops upon request from Member States. The UNSD in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions and other regional partners also conducted a series of seminars to facilitate the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics in line with the global implementation programme adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

10. UNSD has also developed a *Knowledge Base on Economic Statistics – Methods and Country Practice* (Background information about the knowledge base is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/EconStatKB/KnowledgebaseArticle10131.aspx>). This knowledge base is part of the Implementation Strategy for the *System of National Accounts 2008* under the principle of integrated economic statistics and serves as a dynamic and centralized repository of information on all aspects of methodology and best country practices in economic statistics. With currently more than 300 documents from over 30 countries and various international organisations, it facilitates the sharing and exchange of methods and practices on economic statistics programmes as well as the provision of guidance to countries.

11. UNSD is currently expanding the scope of the knowledge base by adding a repository on corresponding teaching and training material. Directors of economic statistics of national statistical offices of selected countries with advanced statistical systems have been approached to share their training and capacity building material from their in-house training

programmes. This material should not only cover national accounts but extend to all domains of the statistical production process (such as standards and methods, business registers, survey and administrative sources, integration, dissemination and communication) and of organisation and management (such legislative and operational frameworks and coordination and governance). This training and capacity building material could be made available in different formats such as slide presentation, worked examples and course books. It is expected that this central repository would be beneficial as references for self study and for staff of national agencies that plan to develop and impart similar in-house training courses.

(e) Training material on economic statistics available from the UNECE

12. Training material in economic statistics is available from UNECE's website (<http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Economic+statistics>) listed below. Most of the training material is power point slides while the training website also includes links to relevant international guidelines or manuals.

- (i) **National accounts**, including classification issues; the non-observed economy (country examples); implementation of 2008 SNA; capital services; goods for processing; merchanting; military expenditures; research and development; non-life insurance; pension schemes; and owner occupied housing.
- (ii) **Seasonal adjustment**, including detailed instructions on how to prepare the raw series, how to undertake the actual seasonal adjustment using Demetra+ and how to disseminate the adjusted figures.
- (iii) **Business registers**, including reports of country experiences; use of administrative sources; legal issues; and classifications (ISIC, NACE, SNA).
- (iv) **Price Statistics**, including presentations of the international manuals on CPI and PPI; guidance on sampling; calculation of elementary and higher-level price indices; missing observations; owner occupied housing; adjustment for quality changes; and the treatment of seasonal products.

(f) Training material on economic statistics available from SIAP

13. Economic statistics, particularly the system of national accounts (SNA), has been a core module of the long-term (currently, of 4-months duration) general statistics course of the annual programme of SIAP. A two-month course on analysis, interpretation and use of economic statistics offered every other year covers the SNA. The annual programme also offers short-term (1-2 weeks duration) regional and country courses in response to requests and priorities set by ESCAP member States—which have included specific topics of economic statistics.

14. SIAP is maintaining an e-library as a repository of materials, mainly PowerPoint slides, used in its training courses. The e-library is a work-in-progress, with plans to link this up with other available collections of the World Bank, UNSD, and UNECE. The materials on national accounts can be accessed at: http://www.unsiap.or.jp/ematerial/ematerial_other/National_Accounts.php.

15. In November 2011, SIAP launched, on an experimental basis, a two-month online e-learning course on an introduction to the 2008 SNA. SIAP plans to further develop this online training course and offer it in early 2013.

16. As ESCAP's statistical training institute, its training focus is closely aligned to the statistics subprogramme which for the current biennium includes a regional programme for economic statistics. Ongoing regular training courses as well as short-term courses will incorporate the identified priorities of the programme which is guided by the need to improve capacity to produce a core set of basic economic statistics.

17. Some details on the SIAP training courses on economic statistics and national accounts is provided in the background paper SIAP training initiatives.

(g) Centralised knowledge platform

18. The ISWGNA regularly discusses the coordination of training activities at its meetings but to facilitate these discussions and tighten coordination, a centralised knowledge platform was established on the 2008 SNA implementation website to provide access to resources available from the ISWGNA members and partner organisations. The website is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/impTr.asp>. It is foreseen to include in this portal a coordinated list of activities undertaken by international organisations which will be updated on at least an annual basis.

III. Issues for discussion

19. The AEG is requested to:

- (a) Provide guidance on the topics and format of training to be provided;
- (b) Express views on the training material that needs to be developed for a knowledgebase on training material; and
- (c) Express views on the mechanisms to assure coordination of training activities among international and regional agencies.