DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

**Global Consultation
Draft *Guidelines on
Integrated Economic
Statistics***

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Comment Form

Draft *Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics*

Send responses to: sna@un.org
Deadline: 10 January 2011

Your name:	Art Ridgeway
Your country/organization:	Canada/Statistics Canada
Contact (e.g. email address):	Art.Ridgeway@statcan.gc.ca

To submit responses please save the completed form and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address: sna@un.org by Monday, 10 January 2011. You are encouraged to submit a short response to the questions (yes/no/no comment) even if you have no further comments to offer in the comment boxes. Please focus your comments on substantive issues since a final edit of the Guidelines will be conducted after the February 2011 Statistical Commission meeting.

Relevant documents

The draft publication is available on the global consultation website:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/ies/

Questions

1. Do you agree that the *Guidelines* covers well the practical aspects and experiences of the integration of economic statistics?

Yes   ___X____   No   _____   No comment _____

Comment:

2. Do you consider that the *Guidelines* takes due note of the difficulties faced by countries in the integrated collection, compilation and dissemination of economic statistics?

Yes ___**X**___ **No** _____ **No comment** _____

Comment:

Click here and start typing

3. Are there any aspects of integration which you feel have not been sufficiently well-covered?

Yes _____ **No** _____ **No comment** _____

Comment:

My overall assessment is that this is an excellent manual in many respects, and that it will provide useful guidelines for many compilers, especially for compilers of manufacturing and distributive trades statistics, as well as for national accountants. However, the special problems associated with compiling price statistics need more emphasis. The unique difficulties associated with price index compilation present additional special challenges to compilers, but I don't feel that these have been explicitly addressed by the authors of this manual. For example, many countries use judgmental sampling for their CPIs, reflecting the near total absence of product frames and the special difficulties of getting accurate lists of locations for stores, even in countries with a centralized Business Register. Because of this, CPI samples could differ significantly from those used to compile the series they are intended to deflate (e.g., retail trade series, whose samples typically are drawn from store lists or Business Registers). CPIs typically have a fundamentally different collection infrastructure than do other surveys: what is the scope for increasing integration in this respect? The manual is silent on these issues. There are many other topics that could be discussed: encouraging the use of common classification systems, the harmonization of weight reference periods between CPIs and the Quarterly or Annual GDP.

When discussing the benefits of integrated economic statistics, it would be useful to discuss the importance of coherence between macro-economic statistics and microeconomic datasets that could provide very useful insights to better understand and interpret the macro-economic signal. See comments about chapter two, in response to question five below.

4. Do you find the case studies useful and practical?

Yes _____ **No** __**X**____ **No comment** _____

Comment:

The case studies are somewhat useful in that they identify examples that illustrate the points being made in the guidelines. In general, however, the case studies are too succinct to be of practical use. For many of these case studies, it would be useful to have a link to a separate, more detailed, document.

5. Would you like to make or seek any specific elaborations in Chapter 1 to Chapter 7 or in the Annexes?

Yes   __X____   No   _____   No comment _____
Comment:

Chapter 1: Click here and start typing

Chapter 2: The second sentence of paragraph 12 states that resolving data inconsistencies allows policymakers to more clearly focus on the appropriate policy rather than trying to determine the true state of the economy. To some extent, efforts to force the data to tell a coherent story can be based on objective techniques. However, I think the statistical agencies as well as the data users need to be aware that given limited time & resources, it sometimes is not clear what the correct decision is to resolve the inconsistencies. The resolution of inconsistencies often boils down to judgment. Therefore, a resolution of inconsistencies does not necessarily deliver "the truth" to policymakers. We should keep in mind that coherence does not automatically equal accuracy; rather it helps to converge towards a more accurate estimate.

When discussing the benefits of integrated economic statistics, it would be useful to discuss the importance of coherence between macro-economic statistics and microeconomic datasets that could provide very useful insights to better understand and interpret the macro-economic signal. For example, paragraph 21 deals with the integration of financial transactions and real variables and asset prices to provide better understanding of risks and vulnerabilities in the various sectors of the economy. In Canada, the household debt service ratio is a useful macro-economic indicator which arises from integration of economic data. This macro-economic variable, however, does not tell policy makers what percentage of households would be at risk if interest rates were to increase, nor does it tell policymakers anything about the demographic or financial characteristics of the at-risk households.

Chapter 3: Click here and start typing

Chapter 4: The document should emphasize as much as possible the importance of avoiding stovepipe processes.

Chapter 5: The topic of standards and metadata are well covered in the report. The report requires an editorial review. For example, I would propose that the number of paragraphs related to classifications, standards, and the importance of harmonization be reduced, and the focus remain in Chapter 3 under Standards as agreed concepts, definitions and classifications...

However, I do have some concern about the reference to the Statistical Production Process Framework in the Knowledge Base repository at UNSD. This may cause some confusion internationally. In the UNECE Common Metadata Framework, we have the Generic Statistical Business Process Model. Are these similar? STC has adopted this framework internal as a tool for common terminology:

http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/gsbpm-msgpo-eng.htm

I do not have time to verify if this framework was referenced in the UNSD repository, but

the authors should be made aware.

Chapter 6: Click here and start typing

Chapter 7: Click here and start typing

Annexes: Click here and start typing