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**THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN DEPOSITS AND LOANS IN MACRO-ECONOMIC STATISTICS**

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The views expressed in this Paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the European Central Bank.

**Executive Summary**

Current international statistical standards include a distinction between deposits and loans. However, the criteria to perform the distinction between these instruments are not very clear in most of these standards, and/or require additional guidance for the practical compilation of the data. Furthermore, experience suggests that the analytical usefulness of this split may need to be further assessed, taking into account recent financial innovation. A particular problem is when a position between two parties, especially financial intermediaries, is seen as a deposit by one party and a loan by another. Possible options considered are to drop the distinction between loans and deposits or to develop new criteria for making the distinction.

**I. Current international standards**

The guidance provided by relevant international statistical standards may be summarised as follows:

**The 5<sup>th</sup> IMF Manual on Balance of Payments (BPM5)** describes in paragraph 421 deposits as including “both transferable and other deposits. Transferable deposits consist of deposits that are exchangeable on demand at par without restriction or penalty, freely transferable by check or giro order, and otherwise commonly used to make payments (...). Other deposits include all claims reflecting evidence of deposit other than transferable deposits”<sup>1</sup>. According to paragraph 415, loans “comprise those financial assets created through the direct lending of funds by a creditor (lender) to a debtor (borrower) through an arrangement in which the

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<sup>1</sup> A similar definition can be found in Paragraph 516 of the Manual: deposits include “those payable on demand and transferable by check or otherwise usable for making payments and those that may not be readily transferable but that may be viewed as substitutes for transferable deposits”.

lender either receives no security evidencing the transaction or receives a non-negotiable document or instrument". However, no clear-cut criterion to distinguish deposits from loans is provided in the Manual.

In terms of sectors, it may be noted that the b.o.p. and i.i.p. standard components (Table in Chapter VIII and Table 7 of the Manual) show only two sectors for the item "currency and deposits liabilities": monetary authorities and banks. This suggests that non-banks would not be expected in principle to receive deposits.

**The System of National Accounts (SNA 1993)** describes, under items 11.71 and 11.72, "transferable deposits" and "other" deposits, the latter including "all claims, other than transferable deposits, on the central bank, other depository institutions, government units, and in some cases other institutional units that are represented by evidence of deposit". Conversely, according to item 11.83, "loans include all financial assets that (a) are created when creditors lend funds directly to debtors, (b) are evidenced by non-negotiable instruments, or (c) for which the lender receives no security evidencing the transaction"<sup>2</sup>.

The same item 11.83 mentions that "all sectors may acquire assets and incur liabilities in the form of loans", which is in general not the case for deposits, the latter often being part of the liabilities of few sectors, i.e. central banks, other depository corporations and government units. However, as clarified by article 11.73, deposits may appear within the liabilities of other institutional units in some cases: "deposits are most often accepted as liabilities by financial corporations and general government, but institutional arrangements in some countries permit non-financial corporations and households to accept deposits".

**The European System of Accounts (ESA 1995)** proposes the following criterion to distinguish loans from deposits, in article 5.74: "The distinction between transactions in loans (F.4) and transactions in deposits (F.22, F.29) may often be based on the criterion who is taking the initiative for the transaction. In cases where the initiative is taken by a borrower, the transaction is to classify in the category loans. In cases where the initiative is taken by a lender, the transaction is to classify in one of the deposit sub-categories".

The same ESA article recognises however that the application of this criterion is often a matter of judgement and therefore it is not a practical criterion either. For this reason, the

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<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 11.53 gives more general indications on the classification of financial assets: "the classification scheme is based primarily on two kinds of criteria: the liquidity of the asset and the legal characteristics that describe the form of the underlying creditor/debtor relationship. The concept of liquidity embraces other more specific characteristics - such as negotiability, transferability, marketability or convertibility - and these characteristics play a major role in determining the categories".

criterion is supplemented by an additional “convention”, in article 5.75: “by convention, short term<sup>3</sup> loans granted to monetary financial institutions, resident or non-resident, are normally classified in one of the deposit sub-categories (AF22, AF29), and short term deposits accepted by institutional units other than MFIs, resident or non-resident, are normally classified in sub-category short term loans”. This is further elaborated: “Therefore deposits are liabilities predominantly of resident and non-resident MFIs, while MFIs normally have no short-term loan liabilities in the system.”

Corresponding definitions in the **IMF Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual** (paragraphs 127 and 139) and **the (IMF) Government Finance Statistics Manual** (paragraphs and 7.101 and 7.110) are very close to those of the SNA. However, the latter includes in paragraph 7.110 an additional footnote stating that "a loan is distinguished from a deposit (6212) on the basis of the representation in the documents that evidence them".

The **External Debt Statistics Guide** similarly defines loans (paragraphs 3.28) as including “those financial assets created through the direct lending of funds by a creditor (lender) to a debtor (borrower) through an arrangement in which the lender either receives no security evidencing the transactions or receives a non-negotiable document or instrument”. Deposits are defined in paragraph 3.34 as transferable and other deposits, along the lines of the SNA.

A more exhaustive description of international statistical and accounting standards (including references to IAS) can be found in the background document “The borderline between deposits and loans in macroeconomic statistics”.

## **II. Concerns/shortcomings of the current treatment**

The definitions of the SNA93 and BPM5 are not fully clear, though both reflect that deposits cover both transferable and other deposits. The ESA95 provides more detailed guidance. However, as described above, this Manual recognises that the criterion to distinguish loans from deposits, i.e. who is taking the initiative, "is often a matter of judgement". While clear guidance is provided in paragraph 5.75 on how to overcome this difficulty regarding transactions/positions in short term loans/deposits, very few practical indications are available for longer term deposits or loans (the condition set up in paragraph 5.70 being also difficult to identify in statistical reporting). As described in the above-mentioned background document, the ESA95 suggests in its paragraph 5.76 that exceptions to the above-mentioned conventions may be useful.

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<sup>3</sup> According to paragraph 5.22, "short term financial assets (liabilities) are financial assets (liabilities) whose original maturity is normally one year or less, and in exceptional cases two years at the maximum."

From a purely conceptual point of view, this approach does not permit to fully define the borderline between long term loans and deposits, given in particular that the exceptions in paragraph 5.76 might not apply to all countries or situations, and are not listed in a comprehensive manner.

The compilation of fully consistent macro-economic statistics would in principle require the development of a harmonised and fully consistent approach to distinguish between deposits and loans in MFI balance sheet statistics, b.o.p. and i.i.p. statistics and financial accounts statistics. However, the current situation may be summarised as follows:

- The current criteria to make the split between deposits and loans are seen as requiring further practical guidance, which might be elaborated in the context of the review of international statistical standards;
- Nevertheless, from an analytical point of view, it is not certain that the strict application of international statistical standards would meet in particular the requirement of monetary analysts to identify assets which may be close substitutes to money. Indeed, these standards recognise that the definition of money may vary across countries and over time, and is therefore out of the scope of such standards: cf. SNA 11.57 and ESA Annex 5.1<sup>4</sup>. This is one reason why, for instance, the euro area b.o.p./i.i.p. currently considers as deposits funds placed with banks, while they regard as loans funds lent to non-banks.

More generally, it could be asked whether from a conceptual point of view, the split between “loans” and “deposits” is still relevant in an environment of financial innovation. Indeed, financial innovation tends in general on the one hand to reduce the asymmetric position between financial and non-financial operators when they lend and borrow, and on the other hand to reduce the different barriers to access to specific types of financial instruments that may exist for different categories of economic agents. Any long-term work, in particular in the context of the review of international statistical standards, could therefore be preceded by an analysis of the relevance of this split, and whether it would be preferable to discontinue it or, alternatively, to replace it by a more up to date split.

### **III. Possible alternative treatments**

One possible approach may be to clarify the definition of deposits and loans in the BPM5 and SNA93, possibly along the lines of the ESA95 or, alternatively, considering the euro area b.o.p./i.i.p. approach, i.e. performing this split on the basis of the institutional sector of the cash borrower. However, it might be necessary to assess whether any guidance is sufficiently clear to allow for a consistent data collection across countries.

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of the euro area, the definition of money focuses on funds deposited with banks [and to the extent possible central government] with an original maturity up to two years.

Alternatively, it could be checked whether the distinction is still considered as useful from an analytical point of view. Should that not be the case, one should consider to discontinue the distinction between these two instruments in the BPM5 and SNA93. An instrument “loans and deposits” could then be created (possibly under a different name). Within this category, some sub-breakdowns might be seen as useful, e.g. by maturity or by sector of counterpart. The separate identification of repos (if it were possible) could also be made under this instrument. This alternative may be considered only if the usefulness of this distinction for analytical purposes could not be confirmed, or if it were deemed less useful than other breakdowns, which may allow e.g. to better identify aggregates closely connected with the national definition of broad money.

#### **IV. Questions/points for discussion**

- 1. What are the views of Group members on the analytical use of the split between deposits and loans?*
- 2. Should the usefulness of this split be confirmed, do Group members agree that current international standards do not provide clear criteria to perform such a distinction?*
- 3. Do Group members have any preference for any of the criteria mentioned in the note, i.e. (i) looking at who takes the initiative (and whether or not a distinction should be made between short-term and long-term instruments); (ii) taking into account the nature of the borrower (banks  $\approx$  deposits / non-banks  $\approx$  loans); (iii) defining in a very precise way which instruments meet the definition of “transferable” and “other deposits”; (iv) considering the representation in the documents that evidence loans or deposits; etc.?*

#### **References**

*Balance of Payment Manual, fifth edition, (BPM5), paragraphs 415, 421 and 516*

*BOPTTEG background paper # 30 “The borderline between deposits and loans in macroeconomic statistics” (Pierre Sola)*

*European System of Accounts (ESA95), paragraphs 5.70-5.76*

*Government Finance Statistics Manual, paragraphs and 7.101 and 7.110*

*Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual, paragraphs 127 and 139*

*System of National Accounts (SNA93), paragraphs 11.71-11.73 and 11.83*