

Operational Guidelines (Revised)
For the meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts
(AEG)

1. These operational guidelines should facilitate the preparation and the conduct of the meetings of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts (AEG).
2. First the structure of the agenda will be presented followed by the elaboration of each agenda items in the succeeding sections. In the last section, the timetable for organising the meetings is proposed.

I. Structure of the agenda

3. The agenda of AEG meetings contains five main components:
 - (a) Review of candidate issues to be considered for updating in the revision of the 1993 SNA;
 - (b) Review of treatments of the candidate issues for updating recommended by EDGs and expert groups submitted *for decision*;
 - (c) Review of treatments of the candidate issues for updating recommended by EDGs and expert groups submitted *for information*;
 - (d) Review of comments on the drafts prepared by the editor for the AEG-approved treatment of issues;
 - (e) Review of consistency with and progress in the revision of issues of the Balance of Payments Manual and Government Finance Statistics.

1.1. Review of candidate issues to be considered for updating in the revision of the 1993 SNA

4. During the meetings of the AEG, agreements have to be reached on the list of issues to be considered for the revision of the 1993 SNA.
5. The criteria of eligibility are set out below:
 - (a) There should not be fundamental or comprehensive changes to the 1993 SNA that would impede the process of its implementation, which in many countries has not yet been achieved;
 - (b) Candidates for updating are issues that are emerging in the new economic environment;
 - (c) Candidates for updating are issues that are widely demanded by users;
 - (d) Old issues that have been discussed and rejected before in the 1993 revision process but may need a further look in the new economic environment due either to their economic significance and/or to an advancement in methodological research that may justify a different treatment;

- (e) Old issues that have been discussed and rejected before in the 1993 revision process should not be candidates for updating if no change in the economic environment or progress in methodology research warrant their consideration for updating;
- (f) Any recommendation for change should have its internal consistency and consistency with related manuals such as the Balance of Payments Manual and Government Finance Statistics Manual;
- (g) Any recommendation for change should consider feasibility of implementation. .

1.2. Proposed format of the issue paper

6. In order to speed up the preparation of issue papers and make better use of the AEG's time, a comprehensive *issue paper* with a maximum main body text of 15 pages. For those issues that are so complex that they cannot be accommodated in 15 pages, the issue should be split into more manageable parts. The ISWGNA asks expert groups and task forces to schedule the steps in the development of issue papers and diligently enforce them so as to ensure that issue papers are completed no later than two months prior to the meeting of the AEG. Furthermore, issue papers should be forwarded to the ISWGNA as soon as possible in order to maximize the amount of time members of the AEG, national statistical offices (NSOs) and central banks (CBs) have to consider them. Issue papers should have an executive summary that is limited to 2 pages. The contents of the issue paper should adequately fulfil the following conditions:

- (a) Executive summary, including
 - Current 1993 SNA position and the reasons for changes
 - Evaluation of the proposed alternative solutions
 - Preferred recommended solution and the implications to the System
 - List of possible questions for discussion by the AEG
- (b) Background and main reasons for changes are indicated;
- (c) Recommendations for clarification beyond dispute, interpretation and real conceptual changes reflect a clear consensus or convergence of opinion of the majority of national accounts experts of the forum in which it has been discussed, be it EDG, city groups, expert groups, etc.;
- (d) Recommendations should provide a single conceptual solution to an issue except in exceptional cases where a group is genuinely equally divided between the solutions;
- (e) Recommendations should be clear and concise;
- (f) Sufficiently detailed worked-out numerical examples through the accounts affected by the proposal should be provided to clarify the consequences of recommended changes;
- (g) Recommendations should provide an indication of the magnitude of the impact on GDP and other major variables if data are available.
- (h) Consequences for the consistency with international (financial) statistics manuals and international classifications are indicated;
- (i) There is a need to take account of business accounting standards and proposed changes to them when developing proposals, which should be reflected in the issue paper.
- (j) Practical feasibility of the proposal is taken into account;
- (k) No need for indication of paragraphs of the current 1993 SNA that need to be revised in order to facilitate the deliberation and rewriting process. (This is a change to the previously issued operational guidelines).

1.3. Review of draft prepared by the editor for changes to the 1993 SNA based on the AEG-approved treatment of issues

7. Drafts of the revisions of the 1993 SNA will be circulated for comments to the members of the AEG as they become available. The UNSD will consolidate the comments for discussion by the ISWGNA and the AEG. Final agreement on the comments will be reached during the AEG meetings and will be forwarded to the editor for redrafting.

II. Organisational procedures for the AEG meetings

8. The organisational procedures of the meetings of the AEG have the following timetable:

- (a) *Three months prior to the AEG meeting:* the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division announces the upcoming meeting of the AEG. For the proper coordination of the agenda of the Canberra II Group and the AEG, the meetings of the Canberra II Group and the AEG are set as follows:
 - The AEG meetings will take place on: last week of November 2004, last week of November 2005, May 2005, October 2006;
 - The Canberra II Group meetings will take place: first week of September 2004 and first week of September 2005.
- (b) *Two months prior to the AEG meeting:* Issue papers should be sent to the UNSD as Secretariat (which includes the project manager and editor).
- (c) *One and half months prior to the AEG meeting:* the issue papers and any comments on the papers by the project manager and editor are circulated by the UNSD as Secretariat to the members of the ISWGNA for comment; a draft agenda for the AEG meeting is circulated by the UNSD as Secretariat to the members of the ISWGNA for comment;
- (d) *Five weeks prior to the AEG meeting:* ISWGNA members submit their decision, whether the proposed issue papers can be submitted to the AEG for decision or information.
- (e) *One month prior to the AEG meeting:* Confirmations of invitations, the ISWGNA-approved agenda, executive summaries and issue papers are distributed to the members of the AEG by the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division.

The times by which actions need to be accomplished in the above timetable are deadlines. Issue papers should be sent to the ISWGNA as soon as possible. Once approved by the ISWGNA they will be sent to members of the AEG.