

ISWGNA and AEG Task team leads Meeting

5 February 2021

Draft Minutes

Participants: Ivo Havinga (Chair), Herman Smith, Michael Stanger, Benson Sim, and Jonathan Gessendorfer (UNSD); John Verrinder, and Nicola Massarelli (EUROSTAT); Jim Tebrake, Jennifer Ribarsky, and Paul Austin (IMF); Peter van de Ven, Jorrit Zwijnenburg, and John Mitchell (OECD); Catherine van Rompaey, Eric Roland Metreau, and Jose Pablo Valdes Martinez (World Bank); Tihomira Dimova, and Rami Peltola (UN ECE); Erich Strassner, and Lis Soelistyowati (co-chairs of the Task Team on Digitalization); Sanjiv Mahajan (co-chair of the Task Team on Communication); Michael Connolly (co-chair of the Task Team on Globalization)

1. SNA update programme

1. The ISWGNA discussed the following draft notes on the SNA update programme:

a. Editorial process for the update of the 2008 SNA

Participants generally agreed with the draft note and proposed to add the following refinements:

- The sub-task team on digitally enabled and interactive statistical standards and classifications should be responsible for providing the technology tools to facilitate the drafting and digital publication of the SNA update.
- The timelines for the workstreams need to be brought forward.
- The roles and responsibilities of the editorial task team members and their relationship with the editor should be clearly specified. It is expected that the Editor will be responsible for the drafting of the SNA update, while the other task team members will be responsible in finalizing the respective guidance notes for their publication.
- Questions were raised about the necessity of having the editor working physically from New York, as this raises costs and may limit the interest of possible candidates.
- Questions were also raised about whether the assumption of a 3-year full time position was necessary given the scope of the update.
- The AEG/ISWGNA should take on the role to review the draft texts.
- The process of selecting the editor should include that the criteria for the selection will be determined by the AEG/ISWGNA.

b. Funding strategy for the update of the 2008 SNA

Participants agreed in general with the note and requested a further breakdown of the estimates and the assumptions underlying the funding strategy:

- some estimates for the funding requirements

- use of language on the nature of the update, which should be “targeted” and not lead to a complete redrafting, however bearing in mind that edits may be substantial to guarantee continuity and consistency.
 - the decision regarding the specific multi-donor trust fund mechanism employed for the SNA update is deferred to the ISWGNA Management Committee
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- c. Strategy for experimentation and testing of recommendations for the update of the 2008 SNA.

Participants agreed that further consideration should be given to the following points:

- Source data/information may be lacking in countries, and therefore may hamper the experimentation and testing of new recommendations, such as those on crypto assets and the valuation of data.
 - Consultants recruited to help countries with experimentation and testing should provide practical rather than conceptual guidance and recommend alternative measurement methods if the preferred methods are not workable, without changing the underlying conceptual treatment.
 - Existing or future technical assistance should be used by international and regional agencies to approach countries in volunteering for experimentation and testing.
 - Regional commissions can facilitate the identification of focal points in the countries which are selected for experimentation and testing.
 - Ongoing work by the academic community can be incorporated into the experimentation and testing programme.
 - National user communities should be invited to review the experimental estimates to ensure their analytical usefulness.
- d. Monitoring the progress of the project on the update of the 2008 SNA and BPM6

It was agreed that the task teams update the project monitoring tool every month and that a quarterly report is submitted to the AEG/ISWGNA and the BOPCOM.

2. UNSD will amend the notes to reflect the decisions of the meeting and will recirculate them in due course.

2. Global consultations of guidance notes

3. UNSD recalled the agreed steps to finalise the guidance notes for consultation which include:
 - Task teams submit draft guidance notes to the AEG/ISWGNA for discussion.
 - Guidance notes are amended by the task teams, thereby giving due consideration to the points raised by the AEG/ISWGNA.
 - Finalised guidance notes are submitted to the AEG/ISWGNA for clearance, before being disseminated for global consultation, which could also include experimentation and testing. The task team should provide a set of questions for the consultation.

- UNSD will inform national accounts community of the consultation and the IMF will inform the balance of payments community.
- The guidance notes and responses will be posted on the SNA update website.

4. The timetable and details for consultation of the following guidance notes were discussed:

a. Crypto assets

- Participants agreed that the digitalization task team and the financial payments task team should coordinate in finalising the guidance note on the treatment of crypto assets.

b. Digital supply and use tables

- Participants were informed that the guidance note on digital supply and use tables is ready for global consultation and that the task team will submit the questions for the global consultation.

c. CIF/FOB valuation of imports and exports

- Participants were informed that the globalization task team developed a questionnaire for testing the feasibility of the guidance on the valuation of imports and exports. The questionnaire is currently being tested by Ireland (Co-chair of the task team on globalization) and is expected to be sent to all countries by mid-February.

3. Joint AEG/ISWGNA meeting

5. It was agreed that the task team secretariats and co-chairs should provide inputs on which substantive issues can be discussed in the joint AEG/ISWGNA meeting planned for March 2021. Task team leads and secretariats indicated that the following guidance notes may be ready for discussion at the joint AEG/ISWGNA meeting:

a. Wellbeing and sustainability task team:

- Recording of emission permits
- Accounting for biological resources
- Labour, education and human capital
- Broader framework

b. Globalization task team:

- Treatment of MNE and intra-MNE flows

c. Digitalization task team:

- Discussion paper on Artificial Intelligence
- Discussion paper on the recording of data

6. UNSD will draft an agenda and propose suitable dates for the AEG meeting.

4. United Nations Statistical Commission modalities and side events

7. UNSD described the process of the online 52nd session of the Statistical Commission. National Statistical Offices can provide written statements on the report of the ISWGNA in advance. UNSD will prepare a draft summary of the statements in consultation with the ISWGNA by 24 February. The agenda item for National Accounts is scheduled for 2 March, at 9 AM EST; the final report will need to be available at 2 PM the same day. Stefan Schweinfest will introduce the agenda item. It was agreed that the introduction of the agenda item will be drafted by UNSD in consultation with the ISWGNA.
8. Participants took note of the two side events organized by the ISWGNA and the communications task team. The first is on the “Communication Strategy” (9:00 am EST, Monday, 22 February 2021), and the second on “Interactive and Digitally Enabled Statistical Standards and Classifications” (4:00 am EST, 23 February 2021). The participants will reach out to their respective organisations to share the side events.

5. Future regular meetings of the ISWGNA

9. It was agreed to schedule more regular meetings of the ISWGNA (which could be either meetings of ISWGNA members or joint meetings of ISWGNA members and task team leads), to facilitate the organization of the update process of the SNA. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of 15 to 19 February 2021.

6. Any other business

10. The implications of a consistency issue between the new definition of employment for labour market Statistics and the SNA has been brought to the attention of the meeting.
11. It was agreed to establish a new workstream to address various consistency issues with other statistical domains and within the SNA, including employment.