

ISWGNA Management Group Meeting

24 July 2020

Minutes

Participants: Mariana Kotzeva (Eurostat); Louis Marc Ducharme and Dragana Ostojic (IMF); Paul Schreyer (OECD); Stefan Schweinfest (Chair), Ivo Havinga, Herman Smith, Benson Sim and Jonathan Gessendorfer (UNSD); Haishan Fu and Eric Metreau (World Bank)

1. Progress on workstreams

The ISWGNA welcomed the progress of the work of the task teams and the formation of five sub-task teams under the joint task team on communication. The ISWGNA recognized the importance of the early identification of key issues with high complexity for the successful management of the update process and the need to monitor how COVID-19 will affect the experimentation and testing of the recommendations, especially in developing countries.

The ISWGNA recognized that clear criteria will need to be developed to decide when issues need to be excluded from the update of the 2008 SNA.

2. Work programme for the update of the 2008 SNA

The ISWGNA agreed on the update process outlined in the draft SNA update programme. The Group welcomed the importance of the paradigm shift towards a simultaneous update of the System of National Accounts, the Balance of Payments Manual and the other manuals and classifications, which will guarantee a higher degree of consistency among these manuals and the overall system of economic statistics; the benefits of the iterative process of experimentation and testing by countries and the updating of the guidance notes. It also recommended that the ISWGNA report to the 52nd session of the Statistical Commission should underscore the role of countries in the experimentation and testing of the recommendations in the guidance notes.

The ISWGNA discussed the importance of itemizing the budget (including in-kind contributions) necessary for updating the 2008 SNA and recognized the need to fund country's experimental implementation of the guidance notes endorsed by the Statistical Commission.

The group acknowledged that funding for statistical programmes is currently being allocated to the COVID-19 response which may pose severe restrictions on the available funding for the SNA update process.

The ISWGNA agreed to provide a detailed outline of the required budget to the 2021 Statistical Commission. The ISWGNA highlighted the important role of establishing a centralised trust fund for the update of the 2008 SNA and the need to explore other funding modalities.

3. AEG matters

The ISWGNA took note of the two vacancies in the AEG and the aim to fill these vacancies before the next AEG meeting.

The ISWGNA also took note of the agenda for the 14th meeting of the AEG, which will take place virtually from 5-9 October 2020. To accommodate time zone differences, the AEG will meet for 3 hours on each of those five days. The Group agreed that the AEG meeting should focus on the more advanced guidance notes with the objective to take a decision on an initial recommendation to proceed to the experimentation and testing by countries, while the other notes would be made available for information. The ISWGNA agreed on the importance of providing these guidance notes well in advance of the meeting.

4. UNECE and IARIW consultations on guidance notes

The ISWGNA acknowledged the usefulness of presenting the available draft guidance notes at the UNECE webinars and IARIW virtual meeting to get feedback from various stakeholders. They welcomed the initiative to extend invitations for registration and participation in the webinars to national accountants in other regions through the regional commissions.

5. National accounts COVID-19 webinars with regional commissions

The ISWGNA supported the request of the regional commissions to jointly organize national accounts webinars on COVID-19 responses. It also advised that webinars should not duplicate those which have been or will be organized by international organizations.

6. Update of the mandate and governance

The ISWGNA discussed the governance structure of the ISWGNA and AEG in view of the proposals by the Friends of the Chair Group on Economic Statistics (FOC Group) to streamline working methods and terminology for Committees of Experts of the Statistical Commission working in the domain of economic statistics. The ISWGNA agreed that no changes to its working methods should be made until the FOC Group has finalized its consultation on the working methods with the various Committees working on economic statistics. The use of harmonized terminology like Committee of Experts should be qualified in being subject to the final recommendations of the FOC Group.

In addition, the ISWGNA noted that the current SNA and BPM update process and the involvement of countries in resolving issues on the research agenda are in line with the thrust of the FOC Group to better involve countries and to coordinate the work programmes across various economic statistics domains. It was also noted that this example could be used by the FOC Group in its report to the 52nd session of the Statistical Commission as evidence of the implementation of its recommendations.

7. Next meeting

The date for the next meeting will be decided in due course.