

BPM7 Chapter 20/2025 SNA Chapter 21.
**Communicating and Disseminating Economic
Statistics: Annotated Outline**

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(New SNA/BPM chapter)

I. Introduction

- This chapter aims to provide principles and guidelines together with innovative approaches for producers of macroeconomic statistics to improve the way those statistics are communicated. This helps in increasing comparability, understanding, and the experience for the users of these statistics.
- The way in which macroeconomic statistics are communicated has a significant impact on users' understanding and utilization of the data. Thus, communication is a very important aspect when it comes to presenting statistical information, making sure that a wide range of users properly understand them, comprehend the full extent of their analytical usefulness and draw the right conclusions. There is an ever-growing focus on the need to improve communication and to meet the needs of a diverse range of users.
- For producers of macroeconomic statistics, the aim should be to develop their statistical systems to disseminate comprehensive, timely and reliable data. The role of dissemination should be viewed as a key component of the production chain of official statistics. This reinforces the need to establish a clear communication policy and data dissemination strategy.
- The chapter will include nine sections, including an introduction (Section I), communication policy and dissemination strategy (Section II), communication with users – principles and standards (Section III), communication with suppliers (Section IV), statistical confidentiality (Section V), taxonomies and metadata (Section VI), a framework for measuring alignment with the economic accounting statistical standards (Section VII), prominence of net measures compared to gross measures (Section VIII), and examples of the use of easier to understand terminology for users (Section IX). See the Schematic Overview for details.

II. Communication Policy and Dissemination Strategy

- The production, analysis, and dissemination of official statistics must be done in a transparent and accessible way. To aid all users, information is provided through different channels, for example websites, regular press releases, statistical reports, and emails. This section will also cover:
 - links to media and users; and
 - objectives of a dissemination strategy to meet users' needs and to provide maximum access to official statistics.

¹ Prepared by Sanjiv Mahajan (Supporting Editor) with inputs from Kristy Howell and Venkat Josyula (IMF) and cleared by the SNA/BPM Project Managers.

² This is an annotated outline for the chapter. Some links between this chapter and other *2008 SNA/BPM6* chapters are noted. In the drafting stage, there may be further adjustments to balance the content between chapters.

- Other aspects that will be reflected upon in a concise way, with references to existing guidance where available, include:
 - communication with policy and media relations;
 - publication policy, including a release calendar to promote transparency;
 - revision policy—to explain to users why revisions are necessary and help to improve quality of the statistics as well as lay out in advance when revisions are expected;
 - regular analysis of press coverage and feedback;
 - user satisfaction surveys to aid continuous improvement;
 - different digital formats, use of XML and/or other machine-readable formats;
 - communication narratives/terminology to target different user groups;
 - sharing more metadata linked to and via the alignment frameworks (see Section VII);
 - reference to the National Summary Data Pages (NSDPs) that most countries have in place to disseminate economic statistics; and
 - links to the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and guidance on integrated economic statistics (such as the UN *Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics*) to draw out further the links and roles between official statistical producers, their communication/media teams, and users.
- The preparations of all official statistics publications should ensure clear, understandable headline messages which can be extracted from sound data, methods and analyses. It is the responsibility of the statistical producers(s) to ensure any message is clearly described, often in a non-technical manner, while more technical/methodological features or statistical conclusions could be provided in accompanying documents.
- The section will reflect the results of testing of the Communications Task Team (CMTT) Guidance Notes.

III. Communication with Users – Principles and Standards

- It is widely accepted that official statistics should be reliable, objective, and relevant for decision making. The UN has a well-established and agreed suite of *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2013)*, of which Principle 1 is key for communication.
- To help establish good dissemination practices, there is a range of information, good practices, and dissemination standards already available which will be referenced.
- The need to be aware and understand who the users may be and what are their needs is extremely important. This knowledge helps to steer what message is being conveyed when statistics are released in a language understood by users (who may not have the technical expertise of the nuances of National and International Accounts or references like the SNA or BPM). Also, to note, there is a balance and correctness to be struck when publishing in a local language but also to reach an international audience publishing in a more widely international used language is advised.

- This section will also cover the types of users—including the media; indirect users; and the importance of treating users equally in terms of access to macroeconomic statistics in advance of publication. In addition, this section will provide guidance on the treatment of sensitive data (not for public use) and on data made available as “freely available via regular releases and publications” versus “bespoke analyses” requested by users (which may have to be paid for).

IV. Communication with Suppliers

- Producers of official statistics need to communicate effectively with their data suppliers, who represent a unique set of stakeholders that may or may not be users of official statistics. In particular, the use of language that suppliers can understand is essential in collecting data to enable the compilation of the appropriate definitions as laid out in the economic accounting statistical standards, either directly or appropriately adjusted to meet the relevant definitions.
- This section will also cover the types of suppliers and links to the suppliers as well as the usefulness of providing statistics which are the direct result of the data provided by the producers.

V. Statistical Confidentiality

- In terms of statistical confidentiality, by law, most official statistics producers collect data from businesses and households for statistical purposes only and often under some legislation. Statistics based on these data cannot be disseminated, sold, or published in a way that permits the identification of data referring to a particular business or household. Thus, it is important to ensure appropriate data confidentiality policies, anonymization techniques and disclosure checking procedures are in place as part of the process before publication of any data.
- As much as statistical confidentiality is very important, it should not be used per se as a reason not to release information. On the other hand, the goal should be to maximize the dissemination of information as a public good for the wide range of users while still ensuring confidentiality obligations are met. This section will also refer briefly to approaches to achieve greater access (e.g., data labs, data access agreements for statistical purposes or research purposes) allowing researchers access to micro data.

VI. Taxonomies and Metadata

- Official statistics producers need to communicate effectively to users the information related to data quality, timeliness, frequency, and the reference period of the product (GN CM.3). They also must provide information about the substance of the release and sources of revisions, including whether it reflects changes in methods, coverage adjustments, source data changes, or presentational changes (GN CM.3).
- All statistical products should be accompanied with explicit reference to documentation on quality and methodology. More detail will be covered.

- Drawing from the forthcoming outcomes of GN CM.3 and related testing, this section will provide guidelines to a coherent taxonomy to communicate: (a) releases and vintages of data; (b) release calendars; (c) revision policies; and (d) quality and types of statistical products.³
- This section will also include references to the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standards.

VII. A Framework for Measuring Alignment with the Economic Accounting Statistical Standards

- One important feature of the economic accounting statistical standards is their ability to facilitate the comparison of estimates across countries. For users to be confident when making these cross-country comparisons, they need some assurance that the countries they are comparing are on the same basis and have implemented these standards consistently. However, when countries use an economic accounting statistical standard to compile macroeconomic statistics, a certain degree of choice, freedom and variation can be taken in implementing the recommendations for reasons ranging from limited resources and data availability to the needs to meet policy demands. This results in varying degrees of “alignment” to these standards across countries.
- This section covers an alignment framework (from GN CM.1) that countries can use to assess the alignment of their national macroeconomic statistics to the economic accounting statistical standards. The alignment framework provides a relatively simple tool that statistical producers can use to self-evaluate their statistics and share this with users in an easily digestible format.
- The framework is structured around the key building blocks of the statistical standards—concepts, accounting rules, methods, classifications, and the resulting accounts and/or tables that are produced and published. The framework will be presented in a concise way.
- This section will also cover the benefits of an alignment framework; describe the dashboard approach and reflect the results from the testing of GN CM.1; cover the broader ways to assess level of compliance and data quality; and include links to where the alignment frameworks for the respective accounts will be available online. It will also explain some of the limitations of the alignment framework, which is voluntary and based on self-assessment.
- This section will also acknowledge the existing frameworks and tools that can be used by statistical producers and users to assess the coverage, accessibility and quality of economic statistics, including the [IMF Data Quality Assessment Framework](#).

VIII. Prominence of Net Measures Compared to Gross Measures *(Note this section is pending final conclusions on the forthcoming GN CM.4)*⁴

- This section will describe (a) the need to increase the prominence and use of net measures; (b) the need to reduce the use of the term “gross” to those areas laid out in the SNA; and (c) references made

³ Note that satellite accounts (which are recommended in GN CM.3 to be referred to as “supplementary accounts” or “thematic accounts”) are discussed briefly in *BPM6* in Annex 2.1; this Annex will be dropped in *BPM7* since the topic will be covered in this new chapter. In the *2025 SNA*, thematic accounts will be covered in detail in Chapter 38, Thematic Accounts.

⁴ This section will also cross-reference parts elsewhere in the SNA to avoid any duplication.

in full—for example, acquisitions less disposals, lending less borrowing, etc. rather than using the phrase “net”.

- More importantly, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in the "net" aggregates. From a conceptual perspective, "net" aggregates are more appropriate than the "gross" counterparts. The "net" aggregates are preferred as they are more reflective of the actual costs borne in production. However, the measurement challenges mentioned earlier also make it difficult to arrive at comparable aggregates across countries.
- The SNA update has improved the articulation of the differences in the concepts of consumption of fixed capital (related to produced assets) and the treatment of depletion of natural resources (related to non-produced assets) recorded within the costs of production. Thereby the conceptual advantage of using "net" measures such as net domestic product and net national income become clear and should be encouraged to become the headline-based indicators, although users may still be interested in particular purposes in the "gross" counterparts.

IX. Examples of the Use of Easier to Understand Terminology for Users *(Note this section is pending final conclusions on GN CM.2)*⁵

- The economic accounting statistical standards has a vast array of specific technical descriptions of concepts and the underlying definitions with explicit inclusions and exclusions. Often the labels used help the producers and communication across the producers' community, however they are often not user friendly or understood by users.
- Without changing any of the technical definitions, this section proposes a limited number of examples of user-friendly terms that could be considered by producers when engaging with users, in particular, non-technical users. Examples will be based on those tested with a range of users as part of GN CM.2 and will be proposals producers could consider (allowing for translation differences).
- This section will also include a reference to the technical glossary.

⁵ Note that this chapter does not address other proposals from GN CM.2, relating to possible changes in standard terminology to introduce consistency across the domains (for example, the proposal to align all domains on the use of the terms “revenues” and “expenses” instead of “resource” and “use” or “credit” and “debit”). These proposals are being tested, and if adopted, would then be reflected throughout the manuals.

Schematic Overview

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III	Communication with Users - Principles and Standards
IV	Communication with Suppliers
V	Statistical Confidentiality
VI	Taxonomies and Metadata
VII	A Framework for Measuring Alignment with the Economic Accounting Statistical Standards
VIII	Prominence of Net Measures Compared to Gross Measures
IX	Examples of the Use of Easier to Understand Terminology for Users Box: Examples of User-Friendly Terminology

References

- GNs CM.1, CM.2, CM.3 and CM.4
- SNA
- BPM
- GFS
- UK Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence, "Public Understanding of Economics and Economic Statistics," ESCoE Occasional Paper No. 03, November 2020
- UN *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2013)*

Key Stakeholders Consulted

- SNA and BPM editors
- IMF Statistics Department GO and FI
- Members of CMTT