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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS*

2012-513

* This report was prepared by Peru, the coordinating country of the Working Group on National Accounts.

INTRODUCTION

At its sixth meeting in Bávaro on 16-18 November 2011, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC agreed to continue implementing the central framework of the System of National Accounts 2008 (SNA 2008). It also agreed to boost international cooperation through knowledge sharing and by establishing regional plans encompassing joint strategies for the benefit of the countries of the region in terms of building technical expertise and institutions, with a view to promoting the production of basic statistics and the modernization of national accounts systems in accordance with the guidelines proposed by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts, and considering each country's existing priorities and resources in the context of the proposal on regional public goods.

The Working Group on National Accounts, together with working groups on other statistical-economic topics, was set up as a commitment arising from the third meeting of the Statistical Conference in Santiago in June 2005 and because of a need to establish lines of activity and outputs and expand on the priorities identified in the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities. At the fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference in Bogota in August 2009, the terms of reference for the working groups were laid down. The goal of the Working Group on National Accounts is to contribute to the implementation of the SNA 2008 in the region, and to promote greater integration between the production of basic economic statistics, national accounts and their use.

At the fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference in Bogota in August 2009, Peru was assigned the role of coordinator of the Working Group on National Accounts in the region. Its task was to continue coordinating activities that would contribute to the implementation of the SNA in the region.

As technical secretariat of the working group, ECLAC has aided the Latin American and Caribbean countries in understanding and implementing the SNA, endeavouring to significantly improve the quality, coverage and timeliness of information in the region.

At the working group's first technical meeting in Santiago in December 2009, the proposals for the 2009-2011 programme of work were discussed and defined, as was the project for strengthening the system of producing national account statistics. The programme activities include improving the production of basic economic statistics and facilitating the adoption and implementation of the Luxembourg Recommendations, the general objective of which is to promote the implementation and dissemination of international standards in national accounts and economic statistics in developing countries.

A. NAME OF THE WORKING GROUP AND COORDINATING COUNTRY

- Working Group on National Accounts
- Coordinating country: Peru

B. MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

- Brazil: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)
- Chile: National Institute of Statistics (INE)
- Colombia: National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE)
- Cuba: National Statistical Office (ONE)
- France: National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE)
- Guyana: Guyana Bureau of Statistics
- Jamaica: Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)
- Mexico: National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI)
- Peru (coordinating country): National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI)
- United States: United States Census Bureau

1. Role of the coordinator of the Working Group on National Accounts

As the coordinating country of the Working Group on National Accounts, Peru, through INEI, was responsible for coordinating activities designed to contribute to implementation of the SNA 2008 in the region.

INEI made available two technical bureaux to provide ongoing support for the working group's activities: the National Bureau of National Accounts assumed responsibility for drafting technical documentation and the Technical Office of Planning, Budget and Technical Cooperation was responsible for coordinating international technical cooperation and organizing courses and seminars on economic statistics and national accounts.

Member countries of the working group communicated and coordinated with non-members via e-mail, videoconference and teleconference.

2. Relations with international organizations

Relations between the member countries and international organizations come into play where there are common regional obstacles to consolidating the production of economic statistics and compiling national accounts in Latin America and the Caribbean. There are clear advantages to implementing one regional strategy as opposed to numerous national strategies:

- Economies of scale and multiplier effects can be created with regard to activities, resources and desired results.
- National and regional expertise is created and strengthened, facilitated by networking and knowledge sharing.
- A collective platform is built and a strategy and a plan of action is coordinated, capitalizing on the progress made by Latin American and Caribbean countries that are more advanced in the process, and producing better results than when each country worked alone.

- Coordination between countries boosts access to regional and international documentation, standards, tools and technical expertise that can be used in regional and national work.
- Given that implementation of the SNA 2008 varies across the region, countries that have made more progress can support the others via horizontal cooperation. In addition, countries with few resources can derive great benefit in ways that would have been impossible on an individual basis by taking collective action and by capitalizing on economies of scale.

C. PROGRAMME OF WORK 2012-2013

1. Description of objectives

(a) General objective

The general objective is to contribute to the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (SNA 2008) in the countries of the region and to promote greater integration between the production of economic statistics, national accounts and users.

(b) Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this regional plan are: international coordination, the development of methodologies and standards for basic statistics and national accounts, regional harmonization, and human resource development, with a view to contributing to SNA implementation and incorporating the new methodological recommendations for 2008.

(i) Specific objective 1: International coordination

To coordinate the efforts of the international organizations working on development and implementation of the SNA. Diagnostic studies and inventories will therefore be updated and expanded with a view to furthering the preparation of strategic plans for monitoring SNA implementation in the region.

(ii) Specific objective 2: Development of methodologies and standards for basic statistics and national accounts

To raise awareness of the methodologies and best practices used in national accounts estimates in the region and of recommendations, manuals, classifications, norms and international standards that are useful for implementing the SNA in the region.

(iii) Specific objective 3: Regional harmonization

To promote the harmonization of methodologies, classifications, cycles and coverage used in relation to national accounts and basic statistics in the region through workshops, seminars and forums.

(iv) Specific objective 4: Human resource development

Human resource development is one of the strategic objectives, intended to guarantee the provision of basic information and high-quality national accounts. The aim is to expand capacities and specific technical skills via courses, working groups and seminars delivered to staff at national statistical offices and

central banks, and also by identifying national, regional and international synergies applicable to training activities for senior and technical staff in the production of basic statistics and national accounting.

2. Principal activities and outputs for the period 2012-2013

(a) International coordination

(i) Activities

- Update and expand regional diagnostic studies.
In charge: ECLAC, the coordinating country and the Working Group on National Accounts.
- Organize the 2012 Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on National Accounts.
In charge: ECLAC and the coordinating country.
- Prepare a regional horizontal cooperation programme on national accounts.
In charge: ECLAC and the coordinating country.
- Draft a proposal for a regional public good project on SNA 2008 implementation.
In charge: ECLAC.

(ii) Outputs

- Up-to-date diagnostic study, covering:
 - Basic statistics and indicators
 - Progress in SNA implementation
 - Human resources
- 2012 Latin American and Caribbean Seminar on National Accounts.
- Regional horizontal cooperation programme.
- Proposal entitled “*Latin America: strategy for improving the quality and the scope of national accounts and boosting the associated economic statistics needed to formulate public policies*”.

(b) Development of methodologies and standards for basic statistics and national accounts

(i) Activities

- Coordinating country to promote the development of a virtual library to hold national, subregional and international documentation.
In charge: ECLAC, the coordinating country and the Working Group on National Accounts.
- Create discussion forums and networks of experts on specific technical issues of interest in the region.
In charge: ECLAC.
- Make available to the countries a compendium of standards and best practices in economic statistics and national accounts.
In charge: ECLAC and the coordinating country.

(ii) Outputs

- Virtual library up and running.
- Discussion forums and operational networks of experts.
- Compendium of standards and best practices in economic statistics and national accounts.

(c) Regional harmonization*(i) Activities*

- Promote the use of the Wiki platform to support the technical working groups on issues of regional interest.
In charge: ECLAC, the coordinating country and the members of the Working Group on National Accounts.
- Report on the progress made by the countries of the region in terms of harmonization and macro-regional comparison.
In charge: ECLAC, the coordinating country and the Working Group on National Accounts.

(ii) Outputs

- More users of the Wiki platform.
- Report on experiences of harmonizing basic statistics at the regional level.

(d) Human resource development*(i) Activities*

- Encourage the production of newsletters regarding courses on national accounts and economic statistics.
In charge: the coordinating country.
- Prepare a manual on procedures for obtaining international cooperation funds.
In charge: the coordinating country, with ECLAC support.
- Run a course on ERETES software in 2012.
In charge: the coordinating country.
- As part of its schedule of activities for 2012, ECLAC is planning to hold meetings on national accounts, prices and national accounts validation.
In charge: ECLAC.

(ii) Outputs

- Newsletters regarding courses on national accounts and economic statistics.
- Manual on procedures for obtaining international cooperation funds.
- Course on ERETES software in 2012.
- Meeting on national accounts and prices (March 2012).
- Meeting on national accounts validation (September 2012).

D. CONCLUSIONS

Work will continue on the horizontal cooperation programme for the development of basic economic statistics and the preparation of national accounts, to ensure progress towards implementation of the SNA 2008.

The members of the working group and the regional commissions will organize seminars and talks to familiarize policymakers, experts and users of national accounts with the SNA 2008 and to provide an opportunity for them to discuss the implementation strategy.

Awareness will continue to be raised of the methodologies and best practices used in national accounts estimates in the region and the recommendations, manuals, international classifications, norms and international standards that are useful for implementing the SNA in the region.

Work will continue on the preparation of briefing papers on courses and seminars on national accounts and economic statistics planned by various subregional, regional and international organizations.

Efforts will continue to be made to coordinate the activities of the programmes of work of the countries of the region relating to national accounts and basic economic statistics. The aim is to take advantage of synergies in training, methodology experiences and IT processes implemented in the preparation of base and current years.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The horizontal cooperation programme and appropriate strategies for the gradual implementation of the SNA 2008 must be devised according to each country's level of development in basic statistics and its progress in national accounts.
- Strengthen the system of basic economic statistics in a sustainable manner, given that this is one of the challenges facing the region in the preparation of national accounts and the incorporation of the recommendations of the SNA 2008.
- Promote regional action in favour of greater integration between basic economic statistics, national accounts and users that contributes to the implementation of the SNA 2008 in the region.
- Establish mechanisms to coordinate the programmes of work of subregional organizations and countries, in order to take advantage of synergies, and also to improve coordination between regional and subregional experts of the member countries of the working group.
- Promote the sharing of experiences, technical research and methodological proposals between institutes in charge of preparing national accounts and basic statistics.

- Central banks responsible for compiling national accounts, as well as other institutions responsible for this or for compiling economic statistics, must be formally invited to participate in full in the activities of the working group, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and the Executive Committee.
- Active participation from and close collaboration between national statistical offices and the central banks (especially when responsibilities for compiling economic statistics and preparing national accounts are shared between the two) are needed for SNA 2008 implementation in the region.

F. REPORT ON PROGRESS TO DATE

With regard to international coordination, a proposal for a regional public goods project has been drafted, to be submitted to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The strategy pursued by this project is to improve the quality and scope of national accounts and boost the associated economic statistics needed to formulate public policies. Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay are the participating countries.

It has been proposed that the Working Group on National Accounts should meet on 2 July 2012 to discuss matters relating to the 2012-2013 programme of work.