

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Economics Statistics, UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/nadefault.htm>

HISTORY OF WORK IN NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

At its first session in 1947, the Statistical Commission emphasized the need to establish **international statistical standards** as soon as possible. Specifically, the Commission recommended that the United Nations Statistical Office, in consultation with the interested specialized agencies, should work on guidelines for national accounts statistics (national income and expenditure), taking into consideration methodology and international comparability. In view of the emphasis on international statistical standards throughout the history of the Commission, the following national accounts standards, called System of National Accounts (SNA), were produced:

- The **1953 SNA** was published under the auspices of the Statistical Commission. It consisted of a set of six standard accounts and a set of 12 standard tables presenting detail and alternative classifications of the flows in the economy. The concepts and definitions of the accounts were widely applicable for most countries, including developing countries.
- The **1968 SNA** extended the scope of the national accounts substantially by; adding input-output accounts and balance sheets; giving more attention to estimates at constant prices; and making a comprehensive effort to bring the SNA and the Material Product System (MPS) closer together.
- The **1993 SNA** was entrusted to the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) comprising representatives of the European Commission, OECD, IMF, World Bank and the United Nations. The 1993 SNA represents a major advance in national accounting and embodies the result of harmonizing the SNA and other international statistical standards more completely than in previous versions.
- The **1993 SNA Revision 1** was in 2003 again entrusted to the ISWGNA to address issues brought about by changes in the economic environment. The update adopted for review a list of 44 issues and the **1993 SNA Rev. 1** will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for approval in 2007. Issue

papers, recommendations and comments by countries and experts can be found on the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) national accounts website at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/snarev1.asp>.

UNSD NATIONAL ACCOUNTS DATABASE

To serve analytical purposes of the UN and the public the UNSD, mandated by the Statistical Commission, annually collects national accounts data from member countries. The UNSD uses a questionnaire based on the SNA framework. Currently the UNSD compiles two data sets and publishes them in the two yearbooks, namely:

National Accounts Statistics: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables; and National Accounts Statistics: Analysis of Main Aggregates. More information can be obtained on the UNSD website at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/nadefault.htm>.

National Accounts Statistics: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables

The first yearbook appeared in 1958 and contained data for 70 countries and territories. The most recent yearbook contains data for more than 191 countries and territories. These data are reproduced as they are supplied by the countries in their respective national currencies. This data on the national accounts of countries from 1970 to 2004 will soon be available for download from the UNSD website.

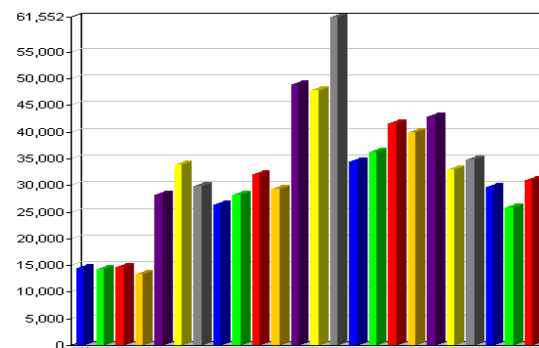
National Accounts Statistics: Analysis of Main Aggregates

To improve the usefulness of the national accounts data, the UNSD database is updated from secondary sources and estimates where official data are not available. This yearbook contains data on gross domestic product (GDP) by type of expenditure and by kind of activity at current and constant prices; in both

national currency and United States dollars. The data from 1970 to the most recent year are aggregated into various groupings, such as, geographical and level of development. The data are also available for download from the UNSD website at: (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/nasa.htm>).

This data set has been available on the UNSD website since November 1994 and attracts an average of over 30,000 visits per month

Monthly visits to the UNSD national accounts data website from November 2004 to October 2006:



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1993 SNA

UNSD series of national accounting handbooks

Assistance to countries to implement the SNA has always been one of the main objectives of the UNSD. Besides working on the international standards for national accounts, the UNSD has been involved in a number of activities to provide technical assistance to developing countries which includes:

- Regional and national training workshops and national accounts projects in countries;
- National accounts projects in countries, mostly financed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank and other international organizations; and
- The publication of handbooks to guide the compilation of national accounts and their associated areas

Until now a series of national accounting handbooks has been published by the UNSD (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/sna1993/handbooks.asp>) which includes

- *National Accounts: A Practical Introduction*, (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/85).
- *Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/91).
- *Use of the System of National Accounts in Economies in Transition* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/66).
- *Handbook of Input-Output Table Compilation and Analysis* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/74).
- *Links between Business Accounting and National Accounting* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/76).
- *A System Approach to National Accounts Compilation* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/77).
- *Use of Macro Accounts in Policy Analysis (Compilation)* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/81).
- *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/61).
- *Handbook of National Accounting: Household Accounting Experience in Concepts and Compilation, Vol. 1, Household Sector Accounts, Vol. 2, Household Satellite Extensions* (United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/75).

SNA News and Notes

SNA News and Notes is a bi-annual information pamphlet of the ISWGNA prepared by UNSD. It contains information on the latest national accounts developments and discusses topical issues. The SNA News and Notes is published in four languages (English, French, Russian and Spanish) and is available on the UNSD website at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/snanews.htm>

Contact the National Accounts Section for enquiries on national accounts data and methodology at: sna@un.org.
