



Concept Note

Inception Webinar for the Arab Region Towards the 2025 SNA

5 July 2021 –1:30 to 4:00 PM Online

I. BACKGROUND

The System of National Accounts (SNA) is designed to give a realistic and compact view of the economy that is suitable for policy and analytical use. As the economy changes and policy and analytical needs evolve, the SNA must be reviewed to ensure its continuing relevance for the purposes of economic analysis and policymaking. Periodic updates are necessary to reflect the real socio- economic changes taking place within and between the countries, the evolution of financial and fiscal instruments, and the improvements of accounting methodologies.

At its 51st session, the United Nations Statistical Commission requested the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) to develop a roadmap for the revision of the 2008 SNA for adoption by the Commission in 2025. Dedicated task teams composed of national accounts experts from various member countries were established to undertake the technical research and draft Guidance Notes (GNs) that, after broad global consultation, will source updates to the SNA.

This SNA update programme uses a three-pronged approach, which includes: Technical research, Broad consultation, and Ensuring overall consistency. The technical research addresses the various research topics in concept and in practice, while the overall consistency deals with the alignment of different economic statistics manuals and standards. The Broad consultation constitutes several rounds of consultations with various groups of stakeholders such as compilers, policymakers, academia, and the private sector. These consultations will be conducted using various instruments, including regional webinars and global forums.

The SNA update programme is now in full swing with several research activities taking place at different levels of progress. In terms of technical research, a consolidated list of SNA research issues comprises priority areas for the research, mainly Globalization, Digitalization, Well-being and sustainability, Cross-cutting issues, and Compilation issues, while a second part of the SNA research agenda is for longer-term.

The outcome of these research activities and the recommendations are described in Guidance Notes (GNs). To facilitate the technical research, the ISWGNA and AEG have been meeting regularly to discuss the various outcomes emerging from these research activities, and to plan the work ahead. Over the past year, several GNs have been finalized and are in the process of (or ready for) global consultations. It is foreseen that most guidance notes would be finalized during the second half of 2021 until the end of 2022, after which they will be made publicly available for global consultation.

ESCWA is already contributing to the SNA research programme in particular to the joint IMF and UNSD task team to update both the system of national accounts and the balance of payments, including the concepts of Islamic banks such as banking, Islamic windows and insurance under the chairmanship of Morocco and the State of Palestine to agree on key conceptual issues related to Islamic finance and national accounts, categorized in six research topics under six subgroups..

At the same time, the broad consultation with various groups of stakeholders on the SNA update programme has been initiated to inform countries about the update process and to engage users in the global consultation of the various guidance notes. In particular, the outreach component will present the progress with the drafting of the GNs and the schedule of global consultations, will establish a positive feedback loop with the member countries, and will promote their active engagement in the SNA update programme.

As part of the outreach efforts, UNSD planned a series of regional webinars coordinated, by the UN Regional Commissions, to expedite the process and ensure efficiency and inclusiveness, starting with an inception webinar about the general overview of the SNA update programme between June and July 2021, followed by thematic webinars by the end of 2022.

II. Objectives and focus of the Webinar

In that context UNSD and UNESCWA are organizing a webinar for the Arab Region in cooperation with GCC-Stat to present the programme, benefit from knowledge sharing, and focus on topics of higher priority and more relevance to the Arab Region. During the “High-level seminar on the future of economic statistics for the Arab region” held in 2020,¹ the recommendations and regional priorities on modernization of the economic statistics system in view of emerging global policies that were agreed upon were mainly the informal economy, well-being, sustainability and inequality; socio-demographic change; digitization and globalization among others. Those are in line with the priority areas of the SNA update and were approved by the 14th session of the ESCWA statistical Committee in February 2021².

The purpose of the Inception webinar is to achieve the following objectives and related documentation:

- Inform compilers about the progress with the SNA and BPM update programme
- Introduce the conceptual/compilation topics to foster informed participation in the global consultation on the GNs
- Collect and verify information of the baseline assessment (about the countries’ statistical capacity to implement the new recommendations)
- Elicit views on the user demand on the new recommendations
- Explore potential volunteers for the early implementation of the new recommendations
- Collect information about the countries’ implementation plans

The webinar material as well as the recording of the meetings will be posted online for further reference and to enable access to the discussions for interested parties that could not attend the meeting.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

The meeting is addressed to specialized audience including compilers and main users of national accounts from national statistical offices and stakeholders, as well as regional statistical agencies in the Arab region including IMF-METAC, SESRIC, AITRS, LAS, ISDB, and members of the ISGWNA and international experts to share their experience and coordinate the capacity building efforts. The meeting will specifically benefit from resource persons and experts well versed on national accounts compilation.

Participation in this virtual meeting is by invitation only. For more information and enquiry about the registration links please contact Wafa Aboul Hosn (aboulhosn@un.org) for further information on the meeting and Wassim Hammoud for logistical issues (hammoudw@un.org). Event details will be posted on <https://www.unescwa.org/events/>

IV. Logistical Issues

Date and venue: will be held online, 5 July 2021, from 1:30 to 4:00 Beirut time.

Languages: Arabic and English are the official languages of the Meeting.

¹ <https://www.unescwa.org/events/high-level-seminar-future-economic-statistics-arab-region>

² <https://www.unescwa.org/events/statistical-committee-14th-session>