



UNITED NATIONS  
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STATISTICAL DIVISION

**Overview of UNECE activities to support the implementation of  
2008 SNA in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia  
and South East Europe**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. This paper provides an overview of the activities that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) carries out to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South East Europe (SEE).

2. Section 2 of the paper provides background information on the UNECE mandate and national accounts activities focused on the EECCA and SEE countries. Section 3 presents an overview of the technical assistance needs of the countries in the region. Section 4 describes in more detail the UNECE national accounts programme in support of the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the region. Section 5 proposes some future activities to address countries' needs and section 6 gives a very brief overview of the work of other international and regional organisations in assisting the EECCA and SEE countries to build statistical capacity and develop national accounts statistics.

## **II. Background**

3. At its 40th session in February 2009 the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) supported the Implementation Strategy for the 2008 SNA proposed by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA). The strategy aims to assist countries in the changeover to the 2008 SNA and improving national accounts and supporting economic statistics. UNSC also requested that particular circumstances of countries should be recognized by introducing flexibility in the implementation programme, and recognized the role of the UN Regional Commissions to facilitate coordination and regional cooperation towards the implementation of 2008 SNA.

4. Following the decision of the UNSC the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) requested the Regional Commissions to develop regional implementation plans in cooperation with existing regional coordination mechanisms or newly established steering groups. The UNECE was thus asked to prepare a regional plan for implementation of 2008 SNA in the EECCA and SEE countries.

5. The mandate for the work of the UNECE Statistical Division is set out by biennial programmes approved by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and by the UNECE Executive Committee. These programmes are further detailed in the Statistical Programme reviewed and adopted annually by the Bureau and the CES. In the part for national accounts the programme states that UNECE should “promote the implementation of the new global standard: 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA)... This work is part of the Global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA, mandated by the UN Statistical Commission.” The UNECE should also continue to “support the implementation of 2008 SNA in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia by providing methodological guidance and training workshops.”

6. In 2009 the Bureau of the CES established a Steering Group (SG) on national accounts, which to assist the planning and coordination of the UNECE activities towards implementation of the 2008 SNA. In November 2012 the Bureau reviewed the terms of reference (ToR) of the SG and extended its mandate for two more years. According of the revised ToR, two of the main tasks of the Group are to:

- Finalize the regional set of recommendations for the implementation of the 2008 SNA for the UNECE countries that are not members of the EU or the OECD. The

recommendations should take into consideration the three stages of implementation recommended by the ISWGNA and the specific circumstances in the EECCA countries.

- Advise the UNECE Secretariat on the formulation and planning of technical assistance activities, with the aim to support the EECCA and SEE countries in complying with the recommendations for the implementation of the 2008 SNA.

7. Table 1 lists the 19 countries from the region that have been participating in the capacity building activities of UNECE.

**Table 1. Participating countries**

Albania	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan,
Armenia	Kyrgyzstan	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
Azerbaijan	Moldova	Turkmenistan
Belarus	Mongolia	Ukraine
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Uzbekistan
Croatia	Russian Federation	
Georgia	Serbia	

8. Some of the SEE countries are candidates of the EU and will follow the ESA implementation programme. However, they were included in UNECE activities as they have encountered similar challenges in transforming their statistical system to the new requirements. Their experience proved valuable for the other countries of the region.

9. In assisting the countries to introduce the 2008 SNA UNECE follows the recommendations of the global implementation strategy as the overarching framework for formulating implementation programmes. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the capacity building programmes reflects the particular needs and specificities of the countries in the region.

10. The UNECE national accounts work with the EECCA and SEE countries involves the following groups of activities:

- **Surveys of national practices and implementation plans.** Two big surveys on the main challenges in SNA implementation in the EECCA and SEE countries and on national plans to implement the 2008 SNA were conducted in 2010 and 2012. These surveys provided valuable information on common difficulties and goals in the region and on technical assistance needs of the countries.
- **Workshops and special sessions** to discuss implementation strategies for the 2008 SNA in the countries of the region e.g. the regional workshop *Implementation Plans for the 2008 SNA in the EECCA and SEE Countries*, organized jointly with EFTA and UNSD (Kiev December 2011); *Special Sessions for Transition Economies* during the meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts in April 2010 and May 2012.
- Development of **regional recommendations and other guidance on the implementation of the 2008 SNA.** In 2012 and early 2013 with the help of the Steering Group on National Accounts UNECE prepared a set of regional

recommendations to assist the countries from the region in developing of national implementation plans for the 2008 SNA in line with the global recommendations. Recommendations have also been provided through the Global Assessments of National Statistical Systems in EECCA and SEE countries, carried out in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA, and through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

- Work to **promote the implementation of internationally agreed standards and good** practices in other areas of economic statistics, including business registers, short-term economic statistics and price indices. This work will help to improve supporting statistics as an important prerequisite for the development of good quality national accounts.
- A designated **website** with relevant documentation and training material for 2008 SNA Implementation. All documents and meetings referred to in this paper are also available through this website. The website is located on <http://www.unece.org/stats/2008sna.html>

11. In the future UNECE plans to organize special sessions in conjunction with the meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts to follow-up on progress with the implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries. In addition to this, and subject to the availability of funding, UNECE in cooperation with other regional or international organisations will provide training, workshops, and technical assistance missions for the countries in the region.

### III. **Technical assistance needs of the EECCA and SEE countries**

12. The information received from the countries through the surveys and workshops identified a number of areas where technical assistance is essential. UNECE with the help of other regional partners will try to address these needs in its capacity building programmes. The countries from the region asked for assistance in the following areas:

- Economic classifications and statistical business registers
- Use of administrative sources
- Improvements of business statistics and short-term economic statistics, particularly for services sectors
- Price and volume measures
- Exhaustiveness of the national accounts
- Integrated accounts and tables
- Strengthening the links between financial statistics and SNA
- Linkages of governments finance statistics and national accounts
- Institutional sector accounts
- Software
- Back casting

13. The countries consider the following forms of technical assistance as most efficient:

- Training workshops (regional or international)
- Region-specific manuals and guidelines
- Training materials and recommendation of good practices

- Study visits to more developed statistical offices
- Internships, on the job training
- Technical assistance missions and visits of foreign experts to provide methodological and technical advice on the identified problem areas
- Seminars including other producers of statistics

14. It is important that the guidelines, training materials and other key documents take into account the particular conditions of the region and are translated into Russian.

#### IV. Regional activities related to the implementation of the 2008 SNA

15. Table 2 lists the completed or planned activities in support of the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the EECCA and SEE countries. These activities are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

**Table 2. Activities to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA**

Date and venue	Activity
February 2010	UNECE survey on status and main challenges with the implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries (2010 Survey)
26 April 2010 Geneva	Special session for transition economies back-to-back with the meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts discussed the progress and main challenges for the implementation of SNA in the region
2-6 May 2011 Vienna	Joint IMF/EFTA/UNECE Workshop on Links between Government Finance and National Accounts Statistics for EECCA and SEE countries
June - September 2011	Country consultation to update of the 2010 Survey and produce country profiles which present structured information for each country in the region
Autumn 2011	Development of template for implementation plans based on the stages and milestones recommended in Global Implementation Strategy
29 Nov - 2 Dec 2011 Kiev	Joint UNECE/UNSD/EFTA workshop on the implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries
March 2012	UNECE survey on national implementation plans for the 2008 SNA
April 2012	Launch of a UNECE website on implementation of the 2008 SNA, including information on meetings, survey results, detailed country information and links to training materials and similar websites of other organizations
1 May 2012 Geneva	Special session for transition economies back-to-back with the meeting of the Group of Expert on National Accounts
January 2013	Regional recommendations for the 2008 SNA implementation in the UNECE region
Spring 2013	Joint UNSD/UNECE Workshop on International Economic Classification will discuss implementation aspects in the statistical offices of EECCA and SEE countries
October 2013 Istanbul	Workshop on Implementation of the 2008 SNA and Linkages to Government Finance Statistics for EECCA and SEE countries
Mid-2014	Special session for transition economies back-to-back to the meeting of

Geneva	the Group of Experts on National Accounts, to take stock and plan for the following two-year period
2014 -tbc	Regional workshop on the implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries
Mid-2016 Geneva	Special session for transition economies back-to-back to the meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts, to take stock and plan for the following two-year period

### **Survey on the current status and main challenges with the implementation of 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE**

16. The survey was conducted in 2010 (2010 Survey) with the purpose to: (1) provide an overview of the availability and scope of indicators and accounts compiled by the EECCA and SEE countries, (2) identify common problems for the region and prioritize the main outstanding issues, and (3) ensure that future technical assistance activities take as a starting point the priorities and needs of the countries in the region. The questionnaire was developed with the help of the Steering Group on National Accounts. More specifically the survey included questions on the availability of GDP estimates, main accounts and balance sheets; main data users and their needs; problem areas related to the implementation of the 1993 SNA; problem areas in relation to data sources and primary statistics; priorities in implementation of the 2008 SNA; types of technical assistance required by the countries. The summary report is available from the UNECE website on 2008 SNA implementation.

### **Country profiles**

17. The report of the 2010 Survey was presented at the Special Session for transition economies, held back-to-back with the meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts in April 2010. Following the recommendations of the special session, the UNECE revised the report and extended it with detailed country profiles. The profiles present structured information on the current state of affairs and the plans for introduction of the 2008 SNA in each country in the region. They were finalized in written consultation with the countries in mid-2011.

### **Joint IMF/EFTA/UNECE Workshop on Links between Government Finance and National Accounts Statistics for EECCA and SEE countries. Vienna, 2-6 May 2011**

18. The workshop brought together experts from ministries of finance and national statistical offices of sixteen EECCA and SEE countries. The purpose of the workshop was to improve the quality and cross country comparability of data for the public and government sectors by training the compilers of both sets of statistics on the recommendations of the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001 and the 2008 SNA, their relationships and possible implications stemming from the 2008 SNA update.

### **Workshop on the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries. Kiev, 29 November – 2 December 2011**

19. The workshop was organised in cooperation with UNSD and EFTA. It was attended by the heads of national accounts or macroeconomic statistics departments from all countries in the region and representatives from the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT). The workshop aimed to support the formulation of national implementation plans for the 2008 SNA and define priorities for the improvement of the quality and the scope of national accounts and related

economic statistics in the region. During the workshop UNECE and UNSD presented structure, main components and practical tools for setting up plans for the implementation of the 2008 SNA. The main changes in the 2008 SNA and practical issues related to the compilation of the accounts were also presented and discussed.

20. The participating countries reviewed a template for presenting the 2008 SNA implementation plans, which was proposed by the UNECE. They agreed to provide their national implementation plans in accordance with the structure of the template. During the workshop it was stressed that efficient implementation of 2008 SNA will require close cooperation between the relevant regional and international organisations. CIS-STAT also works to facilitate the implementation of 2008 SNA and has prepared guidelines for the CIS countries.

### **UNECE survey on national implementation plans**

21. Following the decisions of the Kiev Workshop, a second survey on the national implementation plans was conducted in March 2012 (2012 Survey). The survey used the template for presenting of national implementation plans, which was developed by UNECE on the basis of the stages and milestones of the Global Implementation Strategy and the feedback of the Kiev workshop (see Table 3). The purpose of the template is to help countries formulating structured implementation plans in line with the global guidelines, which at the same time reflect the region specific priorities, needs and resources constraints. It also aims to facilitate the monitoring of the progress with implementations of the 2008 SNA.

**Table 3. The main stages and milestones for the 2008 SNA implementation**

<b>Stage 1:</b>	<b>Developing of national implementation strategies and detailed programmes for the 2008 SNA</b> a) Prioritization of the main outstanding issues b) Consultation with the main stakeholders c) Inclusion of the 2008 SNA implementation in the strategic plans d) Adoption of detailed action plan for the 2008 SNA
<b>Stage 2:</b>	<b>Review of work needed to support implementation of 2008 SNA</b> a) Adoption of new classifications and improvements in business statistics and business registers b) Changes in collection and compilation of business statistics c) New requirements of administrative data sources d) IT and other changes
<b>Stage 3:</b>	<b>Development of National Accounts and change-over to 2008 SNA</b> a) Milestone 1. Basic indicators of GDP b) Milestone 2. GNI and other primary indicators c) Milestone 3. Institutional sector accounts: first step d) Milestone 4. Institutional sector accounts: intermediate step 1 e) Milestone 5. Institutional sector accounts: intermediate step 2 f) Milestone 6. Institutional sector accounts: final step

22. All 19 countries mentioned in Table 1 presented their implementation plans in accordance with the agreed template. The plans were uploaded on the UNECE website. Countries are encouraged to update their implementation plans on an annual basis. The

relevant information will be posted on the designated website. UNECE will use the plans in preparing the regional activities in support of the implementation of the 2008 SNA.

### **UNECE website for the 2008 SNA implementation**

23. In April 2012 the UNECE launched a website for documents and training materials related to the 2008 SNA. The website includes links to relevant UNECE meetings and workshops. It also has links to the respective websites of UNSD, Eurostat, IMF, OECD and World Bank that provide guidance on the implementation of 2008 SNA. The website is located at <http://www.unece.org/stats/2008sna.html>

### **Meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts, May 2012: Special Session for transition economies**

24. In conjunction with the meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts, UNECE and EFTA organised a special session for transition economies. The national implementation plans and the summary results of the 2012 Survey were presented and discussed in order to reach common goals for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. The meeting agreed that regional recommendations for the implementation of the 2008 SNA would be very useful to coordinate the efforts of the countries and outlined some main concerns, which to be taken into account in the development of the recommendations. The meeting also agreed that UNECE should: (a) Continue to support countries in their implementation of 2008 SNA, (b) Strengthen coordination of activities with other regional and international organizations, and (c) Support a coordinated implementation of 2008 SNA and the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6) and the involvement of Central Banks and Ministries of Finance in the process.

### **Regional recommendations for the implementation of the 2008 SNA**

25. In January 2012, UNECE developed a set of regional recommendations for the 2008 SNA implementation based on the information collected through surveys and the feedback received at the Special Session for transition economies. The recommendations follow the main stages and milestones outlined by the ISWGNA and elaborate them further to provide guidance, which is tailored to the needs of the EECCA and SEE countries. They suggest a number of activities, priorities and timeframe, which countries should consider in the implementation process in order to strengthen the quality and international comparability of their national accounts statistics. The recommendations will be finalized in the beginning of 2013 with the help of the Steering Group on National Accounts and will be made available through the UNECE website.

## **V. Possible future activities 2013- 2016**

26. UNECE will continue to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the countries of the region. The work will focus on the challenges identified in the regional recommendations on national accounts. In order to address one of the major concerns of the countries, particular attention will be paid to the cooperation between national accounts departments and the compilers of related economic statistics, providing inputs for national accounts.

27. In October 2013 UNECE together with EFTA and other regional partners will organize a workshop on Implementation of the 2008 SNA and Linkages to the Government Finance Statistics for EECCA and SEE countries. The purpose of the



workshop is to support the implementation of the SNA by strengthening the links between the compilers of national accounts and government finance statistics in the participating countries. It is expected that the participants identify areas, where the consistency of the two datasets should be improved and discuss future activities in this direction.

28. Another workshop that will take place in 2013 is organized jointly with UNSD and will focus on the implementation challenges for ISIC Rev. 4 and CPC Rev.2 in the countries of the region.

29. The regular biennial meetings of the Group of Experts on national accounts in Geneva in 2014 and 2016 should be used to take stock of progress with the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the EECCA and SEE countries and initiate follow-up activities. The countries will have the possibility to raise problems and issues encountered in the implementation process, exchange experiences and good practice. The meeting in 2014 is envisaged to review the progress with the implementation of the regional recommendations and discuss new priorities and future work.

30. The regular national accounts questionnaires (including metadata) collected from the countries in the region in cooperation with UNSD will also be used for monitoring the progress in implementation of the 2008 SNA.

31. Subject to availability of funding, UNECE will organize further workshops and follow-up activities in 2014 and 2015. Efforts will be made that all relevant materials are provided in both English and Russian. The UNECE will also support the implementation of internationally agreed standards and good practices in other areas of economic statistics, such as statistical business registers, short-term economic statistics and price indices.

## **VI. International and regional cooperation**

32. Joined efforts of international and regional organisations in providing technical assistance to the EECCA and SEE countries through the organization of workshops, developing of practical guidance and training material is essential to enhance effective and timely implementation of the 2008 SNA in the region.

33. Manuals, planning tools and training materials have been developed by many international organizations, including UNSD, Eurostat, IMF, OECD and the World Bank. CIS-STAT works to facilitate implementation of 2008 SNA in the CIS countries and has prepared specific guidelines.

34. EFTA and the EU assist the countries neighbouring the enlarged EEA to develop their statistical methods and standards in line with international norms. EFTA gives priority to countries, which have concluded Declarations on Cooperation or Free Trade Agreements with EFTA. Support is mainly granted to economies in transition in the SEE and Mediterranean regions, and to recent and prospective partner countries to the eastern boundary of the enlarged EU.

35. IMF conducts training courses on 2008 SNA and on quarterly national accounts. IMF also provides technical assistance in national accounts through a variety of venues, including staff missions to individual countries.