New Developments in the System of National Accounts

Stanislava Hronová[1] | *Prague University of Economics and Business, Prague, Czech Republic*

On 11–12 June 2026, the nineteenth conference of the *Association de Comptabilité Nationale* (ACN) was held in Paris at the OECD premises in Boulogne-Billancourt. The international conference was organised under the auspices of the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE) and with the support of the OECD. The conference was attended by around one hundred experts from more than ten countries representing national statistical offices, universities, research institutes, and other national and international institutions, including Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund, and the OECD.

The conference programme was divided into five relatively independent thematic sessions. The topics selected by the organisers generated considerable interest among all participants, both because of the wide range of issues addressed and because of the richness of the subsequent discussions.

The conference proceedings were, once again this year, highly interesting and valuable. The following overview presents some of the most significant contributions.

The conference was officially opened by Monica Brezzi, Director of the Statistics Division at the OECD, who emphasised the importance of bringing together experts in the field of national accounting, particularly at a time of economic turbulence when it is essential to provide a consistent view of economic developments in European countries based on the harmonised methodology of national accounts. At present, as work is underway to complete the ESA 2030 standard, the OECD has identified three main areas of activity: data preparation and processing, technical assistance, and methodology. The implementation of the new ESA 2030 standard will require very close cooperation between national accounts experts and other statisticians in order to ensure that phenomena such as the environment, the digital economy, income inequalities, and other emerging issues are properly reflected in official statistics.

The second invited speaker was Fabrice Lenglart, Director-General of INSEE. In his presentation, he focused mainly on new challenges arising from recent developments in society – including digitalisation, artificial intelligence, the emergence of new products and new professions – which official statistics and national accounts must capture. Another important development will undoubtedly be the introduction of the digital euro, which is expected to play an increasingly important role in cashless payments.

The conference was chaired by François Lequiller, President of ACN and former Director of the National Accounts Department at INSEE and of the OECD National Accounts Division. The first thematic session, devoted to *New standards for national accounts*, focused on the changes that will result from the forthcoming United Nations and European Union standards.

In his contribution *Presentation of SNA 2025 and ESA 2030*, John Verrinder (Eurostat) discussed the main parameters of the changes introduced by the new standards. He recalled the continuity between

[1] Department of Economic Statistics, Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, Prague University of Economics and Business, W. Churchill Sq. 4, 130 67 Prague 3, Czech Republic. E-mail: hronova@vse.cz. ORCID: <0000-0002-3568-9755>.

the latest United Nations and European Union standards and stressed the need to harmonise the frameworks applied in European and non-European countries.

The ESA 2030 standard will introduce changes affecting both the basic framework and the values of certain macroeconomic aggregates, as well as changes that will extend the scope of the existing framework. The first group of conceptual changes includes, in particular, the inclusion of the depletion of natural resources as a production cost (which will affect the measurement of net domestic product), and the introduction of new categories of renewable energy resources and natural resources as non-produced assets. Another significant change will be the inclusion of data (not only databases) among produced assets. This means that data will be incorporated into the output, with an impact on the value of gross domestic product. Similarly, crypto-assets will be included, with their mining and validation activities recognised as output, also affecting the value of gross domestic product.

The second group of changes concerns, in particular, more detailed monitoring of household income and expenditure, as well as the development of information on household assets and liabilities.

In conclusion, Verrinder stressed that ESA 2030 will retain a stable structure, with revisions incorporated both into the main framework and in the annexes. The implementation of the key changes in national statistical systems is expected to take place in 2030, while partial modifications and extensions will be introduced gradually.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion that focused mainly on the proposal that "net" aggregates should become more prominent at the expense of "gross" aggregates. This approach was questioned in view of the long-standing tradition, practical experience and substantive arguments concerning the international comparability of estimates of the consumption of fixed capital. In addition, "gross" indicators, particularly GDP, are widely used in the construction of relative indicators, including those required by European legislation.

A particularly interesting contribution in this session was the presentation *Cryptocurrencies and National Accounts* by Jeremy Fouliard (INSEE). Cryptocurrencies represent a new phenomenon that undoubtedly poses significant challenges, especially regarding their definition as production activities (mining and validation), their recording in terms of stocks and changes in assets and liabilities, and their international comparability. Given the volatility of this type of asset, Fouliard called for a cautious and gradual approach to methodological changes. Crypto-assets have their own underlying technology, their own operating mechanisms and their own specific "culture" (codes and anonymity). A fundamental question is for example what cryptocurrencies actually represent. Should they be classified as financial or non-financial assets? As produced or non-produced assets? If they are financial assets, do they have a corresponding liability? If crypto-assets have no counterpart liability, they can only be classified as non-financial, non-produced assets. A further and broader challenge for official statistics will be the classification and recording of the various transactions involving these crypto-assets.

The second thematic session was devoted to the topic of *Military Expenditure*. In his presentation *Military Expenditure – Its Recording in the French National Accounts*, Jean-Cyprien Héam (INSEE) addressed not only the specific features of France but also placed them in the broader context of EU and NATO requirements.

He emphasised that, although exceptions exist regarding the inclusion of military expenditure in the government deficit under the Maastricht rules, neither the definition of military expenditure nor the calculation of the government balance (net lending/net borrowing) is affected by these exceptions. This creates additional requirements for official statistics in terms of the accuracy of definitions, transparency and international comparability of the various categories of military expenditure.

Particular difficulties arise in the area of investment. These include how to record deliveries of complex weapons systems (such as ships, submarines and aircraft), which are often produced in several different

countries; how to record deliveries of ammunition to storage facilities abroad; and how to address issues related to confidentiality and security requirements.

Héam also recalled the differences between the classification of defence expenditure according to COFOG and according to NATO. Unlike COFOG, the NATO classification does not include civil defence within military expenditure. On the other hand, it applies a broader concept to expenditure on customs services, police forces and border protection where these activities have a paramilitary role. It also adopts a broader approach to expenditure on research and development infrastructure and facilities with dual military and civilian use.

Pierre Muller (ACN) reviewed the history of recording military expenditure in the French national accounts (*Military Expenditure and National Defence Service: Evolution of Approaches in National Accounts*). He recalled that, until the beginning of the 1970s, military expenditure was not included in the output in French national accounts, because non-market output itself was not taken into account at that time (similarly to the situation in the Material Product System used in socialist countries).

Subsequently, in accordance with the international standards then in force, all military expenditure in France (with the exception of military accommodation buildings) was included in intermediate consumption. The adoption of the SNA 1993 and ESA 1995 standards brought a major change: military expenditure on infrastructure, construction, weapons systems, transport equipment and other tangible and intangible fixed assets was reclassified from intermediate consumption to gross fixed capital formation, while ammunition and light weapons were recorded as inventories.

Muller also noted that, with the adoption of the SNA 2025 standard, "military" data will also be included within military expenditure. Given the specific characteristics of defence expenditure, he considered the establishment of a Defence Satellite Account to be a useful development. Such an account would enable more precise definitions of activities whose outputs are included in production measures and military investment and would ultimately provide a more accurate assessment of national defence expenditure. However, Muller expressed concern that such efforts may encounter difficulties because of confidentiality requirements.

The third thematic session focused on *Satellite Accounts*. John Verrinder (Eurostat) presented the position, importance and role of satellite accounts within the System of National Accounts. He emphasised their broad thematic scope, including health, education, social protection, tourism, and research and development, while noting that many other satellite accounts remain relatively uncommon in EU countries. These include, for example, the Social Accounting Matrix, the Household Production Satellite Accounts, the Social Economy Satellite Accounts and the Non-profit Institutions Satellite Accounts. In the ESA 2030 standard, these thematic extensions and elements expanding the basic framework will be addressed in Chapter 20.

The OECD approach to satellite accounts was presented by Michael Mueller (OECD), who used the example of the *Health Satellite Account for OECD countries*, while Viktoria Kis (OECD) presented the *Education Satellite Account for OECD countries*. The complex issues involved in the statistical description of healthcare systems were further illustrated through French experience by Clément Delecourt and Jeremy Fouliard (both INSEE).

The thematic session on *Environmental Accounts* included four presentations. The most stimulating contribution, in my view, was the paper *How Can Climate Be Taken into Account in National Accounts?* presented by Sylvain Larrieu and Sébastien Roux (both INSEE).

The System of National Accounts provides information on the actual state of the economy, including aspects of sustainability, and also takes into account the costs associated with greenhouse gas emissions. The authors' fundamental question was how the current SNA framework could be modified in order to capture the consequences of climate change. They proposed modifications to several aggregates. Since greenhouse gas emissions contribute to the degradation of climate-related assets, they should

be considered as a form of capital consumption. This approach would make it possible to create indicators such as Adjusted Net Domestic Product or Adjusted Net Saving, which would incorporate the damage caused by emissions into the consumption of fixed capital. The authors nevertheless stressed that such aggregates could not, under any circumstances, have the same status as conventional national accounting indicators. They should instead be regarded as the results of experimental approaches.

The final session focused on issues related to the separate measurement of *Price and volume* developments in aggregate values. Three interesting papers were presented: *Inequalities in the Face of Inflation: The Issue of Real Estate Prices* (Didier Blanchet, Marc Fleurbaey, Craig Pesme, Come Zegna-Rata, INSEE and Paris School of Economics), *Measuring the Volume of Non-market Education Output* (Jeremy Fouliard, INSEE), and *Values, Volumes, Surplus and Consumer Utility: What Are the Relationships?* (Didier Blanchet, Marc Fleurbaey, Craig Pesme, INSEE and Paris School of Economics).

The contribution addressing the impact of rising real estate prices on inequalities in the household sector was particularly interesting and highly relevant also for the current situation in the Czech Republic. In general, increases in the prices of different commodities do not affect all households equally. From the perspective of widening inequalities, this is most clearly reflected in developments in real estate prices.

In general, INSEE uses three main price indices: the Laspeyres consumer price index, which serves as the basis for measuring inflation; an analogous price index used as the basis for the harmonised inflation measure; and the deflator of household final consumption expenditure (the Paasche price index). According to the authors, it would therefore be appropriate to develop different deflators for different socio-economic categories of households. They compared the structure of household final consumption expenditure across socio-economic categories and attempted to estimate the corresponding inflation rates for these groups. They concluded that households with lower saving rates are the groups most adversely affected by price developments.

The conference concluded with the *General Assembly of ACN*, during which the report on the Association's activities and financial management was approved and further possibilities for the development of this international organisation were discussed.

In this context, it should be noted that membership in ACN, hosted by INSEE, is voluntary and free of charge. Individuals interested in joining the Association may find further information on the INSEE website. All presentations delivered at the conference are available on the INSEE website. Available at: https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/8992587.