



Key Messages from the Global Conference on the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative

June 25-26, 2014
Basel - Switzerland

Senior officials from G-20 and Financial Stability Board (FSB) member countries met in Basel to discuss the progress with the G-20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI), from which the following key messages were drawn.

Progress and Challenges at the national level

- There is evident progress by G-20 economies and ongoing efforts to complete the DGI recommendations. The conference also acknowledged the efforts and achievements of the non-G-20 economies in implementing the DGI recommendations relevant for their economies. The fifth DGI report will include a section on the implementation in each G20 economy and acknowledge the work of the non-G-20 economies.
- It was emphasized that the G-20 economies should lead by example but initiatives under the DGI are not necessarily an exclusive process to G-20 economies.
- The DGI recommendations have proved to be broadly in line with national priorities and have been an important driver for statistical enhancements.
- Participants underlined that the DGI has helped to increase inter-agency cooperation both at the international and national level. The expanding synergies between statistical and supervisory data as more granular "macro" information is collected were also noted.
- Political support and peer pressure have been important drivers behind the success of the DGI.
- Some examples of additional resources having been allocated to develop the national statistical framework as a result of the DGI were provided.
- Countries are working on implementing the methodological enhancements such as BPM6 and SNA 2008 as well as developing sectoral accounts, international banking statistics and government finance statistics.
- The areas where common challenges were reported include fiscal data reporting by local government units, the compilation of granular information on banks, and the collection of data from non-bank financial corporations and non-financial corporations.

Future Work Plan

- The Conference supported marking the conclusion of the first phase of the DGI that started in 2009 with a final report in 2015, and starting a new phase of the DGI in 2016. The 2015 report would highlight the substantial accomplishment thus far on the 20 recommendations and the remaining work to achieve their full implementation. For recommendations such as sectoral accounts and government finance statistics, some economies reported timelines of finishing by 2016 or 2017.

The mandate for the next phase of the DGI would be discussed with G-20 economies as part of the consultations under 2015 DGI work program.

- The level of implementation is presently diverse across G-20 economies and some participants suggested that operational targets and convergence of data availability should be included in the goals of a second phase. However, others emphasized that flexibility of implementation is essential to ensure that differing national priorities and resource constraints are taken into account.
- The second phase should aim at promoting the comparability of national datasets presently covered by the DGI across the G-20 economies as well as improving the quality, completeness, timeliness, frequency and general robustness of the data. Participants highlighted the need to consolidate and stabilize the progress to date.
- The conference considers that it is important to communicate that the development of DGI datasets is not of a temporary nature and that a continuous effort should be sustained to expand the number of contributors and enhance data completeness and quality.
- A second phase could add new recommendations as data needs arise from the user community but these should be parsimonious in number. It was also emphasized that it is important to continue to ensure that users' feedback is incorporated into the DGI process to ensure that the datasets being developed are relevant for diverse analytical and policy needs.
- Participants agreed on the need for a filtering process for new statistical recommendations that are based on a solid rationale and considered within the context of the broader statistical system. Concurrent statistical initiatives and resource implications should be taken into account. Relevant existing statistical committees should be consulted in line with existing governance processes. Other relevant groups could also be involved. Prioritization is necessary. The operational details would need to be developed.
- Participants supported the maintenance of the IAG, chaired by the IMF, as a global facilitator. International organizations, according to their mandate and areas of expertise, should continue to promote harmonized reporting templates and the use of SDMX, to coordinate the implementation of relevant datasets and to work to reduce the reporting burden on countries through data sharing.
- In order to ensure continuity of the DGI process with the close involvement of national statistical authorities, which the conference saw as essential in a second phase of the DGI, participants agreed to identify 2 or 3 contact people from each G-20 economy, with whom the IAG would liaise on an on-going basis on the DGI project. Preferably there should be senior level representation, with at least one contact person who can help ensure that the momentum gained from the political support by the DGI is maintained.

- Maintaining the present approach of bilateral, regional and technical meetings but on a biennial frequency was supported. Participants underlined that continuing with an annual monitoring report by IMF/FSB to G-20 FMCBG would help each G-20 economy assess its own progress and against the progress of the other G-20 economies. The annual monitoring report would also acknowledge as appropriate the efforts by non-G-20 economies in implementing the DGI. The global conference could be held biennially or annually if necessary.

Use of the data

- Participants agreed that there is a need to continue to engage with users of data. It is important to promote the availability and usefulness of data coming out of the DGI so as to provide material evidence that the users' needs expressed are being adequately addressed. Participants also discussed the possibility to hold a users' conference and other proposals involving users (e.g. joint research initiatives). Some caveats were raised on the current quality and comparability of some datasets.
- Participants raised concerns over the sharing of data, in particular with the extended requirement to collect granular information, due to confidentiality issues. However, emphasis was also put on the importance of granting the access to available data for legitimate policy purposes. The balance between safeguarding sensitive information and the availability of data for financial stability purposes needs to continue being carefully addressed.
- There was support for the PGI website and suggestions that it could be further enhanced to better promote the DGI and the dissemination of the data becoming available under the initiative.
- The IMF, FSB, BIS and OECD as well as several national authorities provided inputs demonstrating the use of the DGI data for analytical purposes, particularly in support of financial stability and debt analysis. Among the most important priorities, participants identified cross-border exposures of financial and non-financial corporations, private sector credit, domestic and international interconnectedness (including both sectoral accounts and consolidation issues), distributional analysis of the non-financial sectors and government debt.
- Some participants underlined that the definition of net government debt and contingent liabilities needs further alignment to increase comparability. Others stated that focusing more on the specific indicators of government finance instead of broad indicators could bring risks in the analysis.
- Importance of good and easily accessible metadata and a better description of indicators were emphasized.