



Final report: SEEA on Wikipedia

Eurostat grant: 50304.2009.001-2009.267



Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Objective.....	3
3.	Method.....	4
4.	Work undertaken	4
	4.1 Wikipedia inventory	4
	4.2 Learning the rules and the programming language of Wikipedia ..	5
	4.3 Good articles on Wikipedia (extract from Wikipedia)	5
	4.4 Developing a stub	6
	4.4.1 Developing the Scope	6
	4.4.2 Developing the History	7
	4.4.3 Developing the Implementing SEEA section	7
	4.4.4 Developing other related topics (see also)	7
	4.4.5 Input from other experts.....	7
5.	The articles created	8
6.	Expected results of the action	8

1. Introduction

Environmental accounts have been under development in Europe and worldwide since the early nineties. Over the years statistical standards, hard data and common practises have been developed. In more recent years there have been encouragements from the user side, such as researchers, policy users and journalists to highlight the area more and explain better the area. Even within the statistical sphere there has been a call for visualising the environmental accounts better. The UNCEEA as well as the updated ESEA strategy adopted by the SPC in 2008 encourage more information.

Internet technology today can bring further clarification to the environmental accounts and spread information swift and easily. Eurostat has decided to use “wiki” technology that is explained to be comparable to Wikipedia in technical and content aspects to spread available information in an easy and simple fashion. Eurostat calls this step forward Statistics Explained.

Searching for environmental accounts (or accounting) on the web provides several hits on various national statistical offices or international organisations working on the topic. However, barely anything has been available on Wikipedia, one of the largest free online encyclopaedias. References to the existence of the area and brief information about the SEEA and of green accounting can be found.

Wikipedia has recently started a project, Wikiproject Statistics¹ to improve the coverage of statistics on Wikipedia. Environment statistics is one of the mentioned open tasks still to be developed. There is obviously a need to improve the information flow in the statistical area to the world and this project would serve as a stepping stone to do so.

The project team consisted of Nancy Steinbach, Viveka Palm, Martin Villner and Gunnar Sommestad from the unit of Environmental accounts and natural resources, Statistics Sweden.

2. Objective

In 2008, Statistics Sweden developed a web-tool for Eurostat incorporating data from the ESS in one comprehensive database. This facilitates the dialogue with users on what kind of statistics is available from the environmental accounts. As a second approach to further the visibility of the area Statistics Sweden proposed with this project to introduce the environmental accounts on Wikipedia. This could be seen as a background to Eurostat’s own Statistics Explained.

It could of course be argued that establishing environmental accounts on Wikipedia will need a long term commitment to ensure that the information

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Statistics

available is correct and true. However, if the main work is done, the community of statistical producers of environmental accounts should be able to jointly validate the information from time to time.

The importance of Wikipedia at the moment cannot be denied and would serve the area of environmental accounts well. Social media has become a standard tool for journalists today in their daily work. A study covering the UK, France and Germany show that journalists use social media as sources as well as promoting their own work². The study emphasises that social media does not replace traditional tools but rather complement them. The study claims that Wikipedia is the most favoured source of social media.

3. Method

The project was divided into four steps:

1. An inventory of what is available today on environmental accounting on Wikipedia by following links and references was done. Wikipedia was searched for featured articles to provide the project with a background of professional articles.
2. Learning the rules and the programming language of Wikipedia in order to be able to format the text and put in the links and the references.
3. A so called “stub” on Wikipedia (the English version) to inform any interested parties that environmental accounts is going to be described there was developed. This encouraged a discussion in order to develop an appropriate and accepted version.
4. An article on environmental accounts on Wikipedia was written.
5. Discussions on Wikipedia have been held and clarifications have been made.

4. Work undertaken

4.1 Wikipedia inventory

The first task was to conduct an inventory of already existing work with relation to environmental accounts on Wikipedia. It would provide assistance of what could be appropriate to highlight in an article and ensure that knowledge is consolidated for the area.

There is a variety of information available on environmental economics, sustainable development, indicators and areas considered part of the SEEA. However, very few direct references to SEEA are made. One specific area is available, the SEEA Water. It is a short article describing the background to the development of SEEAW and its main features.

² Source: [Cision 2010 Social Journalism Study](#);

Another article related to SEEA is about material flow accounting. The references to that article are however only related to OECD and the ConAccounts with the main site presented being from SERI (definitions taken from here.)

In addition, a brief article on “Green accounting” is also already available.

4.2 Learning the rules and the programming language of Wikipedia

Formatting a Wikipedia article requires some learning and training of the particular editing rules. Wikipedia uses text codes to create particular elements of the page (e.g., headings). This [markup language](#) is known as [Wikitext](#).

See examples of such programming code at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Cheatsheet>

In order for newcomers to train their skills, a “sandbox” is available, where the first attempts of writing can be practised without disturbing the normal readers of Wikipedia.

4.3 Good articles on Wikipedia (extract from Wikipedia)



Good articles are articles that are considered to be of good quality, but are not yet qualified as [featured article](#) quality. Good articles meet the [good article criteria](#) and have passed through the [good article nomination process](#) successfully. In short, they are well written, factually accurate and [verifiable](#), broad in coverage, [neutral in point of view](#), stable, and illustrated, where possible, by relevant [images](#) with suitable [copyright licenses](#). Good articles need not be as comprehensive as featured articles, but they should not omit any major facets of the topic: a [comparison](#) of the criteria for good and featured articles describes further differences.

Currently, of the 3,805,943 Wikipedia articles, about 1 in 288 are categorized as good articles

The process for designating an article as a good article is intentionally straightforward. If you find or contribute to an article meeting the [good article criteria](#), you may **nominate** it on the [good article nominations](#) page for an impartial reviewer to assess. If it is accepted, it will be added to the list of good articles here. Similarly, anyone can propose that an article which no longer meets the good article criteria be **delisted** by following the [delisting instructions](#). If an article's nomination fails or if an article is delisted, an

explanation and suggestions for possible improvements should be provided on its talk page by the reviewer or delisting editor.

Disagreements over article quality can be resolved on the [reassessment](#) page, which [WikiProject good articles](#) helps to maintain.

”Featured articles are considered to be the best articles in Wikipedia, as determined by [Wikipedia's editors](#). Before being listed here, articles are reviewed at [featured article candidates](#) for accuracy, neutrality, completeness, and style according to our [featured article criteria](#).

4.4 Developing a stub

The development of a so called stub started by reviewing existing articles on for example the System of National Accounts and other statistical items. It was important that the SEEA was described in easy terminology so that a wider audience could read and comprehend the system. It was also important that the article was featuring the main headlines covered by other similar articles for the reader to recognise him/herself.

A third important component of developing the stub was that the main article should not be overburdened by too much information. It was therefore decided to, for the time being, leave the explanations about the specific modules to a later stage.

Box 1: the list of contents

Contents [hide]	
1	Scope
1.1	Flows of materials
1.2	Environmental economic statistics
1.3	Stocks of natural resources
2	History
3	Implementing SEEA
4	See also
4.1	SEEA modules
4.2	Other related articles
5	References
6	External links

4.4.1 Developing the Scope

It was seen that the most important aspect of the SEEA is to as briefly but as clearly as possible explain what the SEEA actually contains, measures and its limitations. The stub has outlined the three main components; flows of materials, environmental economic statistics and stocks of natural resources.

The components are then explained and flow charts are included to the article to further enhance the understanding of SEEA.

4.4.2 Developing the History

Some time has been spent researching the history of SEEA and the documentation that verifies the statements. The underlying knowledge of the group helped this search and several important references were found and added to the stub. This specific section is rather long but the SEEA has developed and been enhanced through different processes in Europe and the United Nations.

4.4.3 Developing the Implementing SEEA section

This section is intended to describe the way the statistical offices have implemented the SEEA. The system has many components and during the last 20 years many pilot studies have tested the feasibility and the user interest for most of them. Now that Eurostat have developed the Statistics explained, the description of the three modules of air emissions, environmental taxes and of material flow analyses are linked to this system.

4.4.4 Developing other related topics (see also)

There are a large number of other articles that touch upon SEEA but do not refer to it. In most cases the articles are quite broad but nonetheless, as with this article one has to start somewhere. The links points to following Wikipedia articles:

List 1: other related issues

- [Green accounting](#)
- [Input-Output model](#)
- [Material flow accounting](#)
- [System of Environmental and Economic Accounting for Water](#)
- [United Nations System of National Accounts](#)

Wikipedia has a search engine that removes the “stub” item if the article is sufficiently well developed and this has occurred for the SEEA article.

4.4.5 Input from other experts

The article was sent to four experts on SEEA for their input and comments. Michael Vardon ABS, Sjoerd Schenau CBS, Joe St. Lawrence Statistics Canada and Julie Hass Eurostat. The input has changed the original idea of

describing “The European Approach”, as it turned out that the implementation in other countries were rather similar to the European.

5. The articles created

Three SEEA related articles have been created under this project.

1. System of integrated environmental and economic accounts:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/System_of_Integrated_Environmental_and_Economic_Accounting
2. Economy-wide material flow accounts:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy-wide_material_flow_accounts
3. Environmental protection expenditure accounts
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_protection_expenditure_accounts

One requirement of Wikipedia is that the articles should be kept focused and not too long. The article is now classed as an article. In order to get the Good article class, the article should pass through a revision process to which we have submitted the article.

The original intention was to include more figures, and that was also implemented. However, the Wiki rules then changed and a new process for guaranteeing the copyrights of figures was started. Even for some of the figures that we have designed in-house it is rather cumbersome to get them approved in this system.

Even if this project has now ended, our intention is to develop the description further in cooperation with other SEEA developers.

Domains of interest to develop further are the asset accounts and the parts of the SEEA that are now described as experimental, concerning land use and ecosystems where experience is growing. :

6. Expected results of the action

The expected result of the action and the goal is to enhance the visibility of environmental accounts worldwide with textual information, tables, graphs and statistical standards. By creating this article on Wikipedia, and thus creating a backbone to work from, it has made it easier to continue to build the description as the SEEA develops further.



By doing so, this project is a building block to answer the call from the UNCEEA as well as from the SPC and the European Commission to visualise the environmental accounts to a broader community.