Article

Economic statistics sector classification – classification update and forward work plan: June 2024

Classification of units, transactions and assets for the purposes of economic statistics.

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Next release:
To be announced

Notice

28 June 2024

This article is being discontinued and the last planned release will be published on 28 June 2024. This publication will merge with our Recent and upcoming changes to public sector finance statistics article to form our new Economic statistics classifications and developments in public sector finances article from 19 July 2024. The latest classification decisions, and links to relevant datasets, will be included in our new release. All contact information remains the same.

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1 . Overview of the economic statistics sector classification update

Our economic statistics are produced in accordance with international rules and guidance. Central to this are the rules set out in the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008, the European System of Accounts (ESA) 2010 and the accompanying Manual on Government Deficit and Debt (MGDD) 2022. These include rules on classifying statistical units (organisations or bodies) and the transactions they engage in. A summary of these, and our approach to their application, can be found on our Economic statistics classifications web page.

Our Forward work plan dataset (XLSX, 43.7KB) sets out the organisations and transactions that we expect to assess and classify in the next 12 to 18 months. Please note that classification priorities can change quickly, and the expected dates of completion are only indicative at the time of publication.

The forward work plan does not cover all cases that will arise over the next 12 to 18 months. Cases that are likely to have a smaller statistical and policy impact will be assessed as resources allow. The cases scheduled in this article have been prioritised because of the impact they will have on important statistics, and their importance to public policy.

There is high demand for classification assessments, and we progress many active cases at the same time, with new cases often arising. These include confidential assessments of government and devolved administration policy proposals, as explained in our Classification process methodology.

We do not announce or discuss such policy proposal assessments, to give policymakers the space to develop policy. However, in each December publication, we provide the number of policy proposal reviews that were carried out during the preceding calendar year. As with other classification decisions, when a policy is implemented, it will be classified and included in the Public sector classification guide dataset (XLSX, 672.8KB).

From March 2024, the Public Sector Classification Guide (PSCG) includes a separate worksheet entitled Non-Institutional Units. This contains a list of organisations that, following a classification review, were found not to meet the criteria to be an institutional unit.

These organisations classified as not meeting the criteria to be an institutional unit are classified as part of their controlling body, in accordance with ESA 2010, 2.24 to 2.25. They were previously included in the Organisation /Institutional Unit worksheet, within the information section of their controlling bodies.

We have introduced this new worksheet for two reasons: to provide more transparent and accessible representation of classification reviews carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS); and because some institutional units have many organisations that will be included in their PSCG entry as non-institutional units, and there are limitations on cell size.

In March 2024, we transferred all the non-institutional units that have been classified as part of the Ministry of Justice as their controlling body, to the new worksheet. Over the coming months, we will gradually transfer other previously classified non-institutional units to the dedicated worksheet. Meanwhile, they are still available to find within the existing Organisation/Institutional Unit worksheet, within the entries of their controlling bodies.

Change of publication date

We are planning to move the publication date of the PSCG and forward work plan to an earlier date in the month. This allows us to combine it with the current Recent and upcoming changes to public sector finance statistics article, which is available on the 15th working day of each month (or, occasionally, on the 16th working day).

Publication dates are announced for public sector finances in advance on the ONS release calendar. We expect to implement the change in publication date next month. This means our classification assessments will be published alongside the public sector finances release on 19 July 2024, in the new Economic statistics classifications and developments in public sector finances article. There are no other planned changes to the information that is currently provided.

If you have questions about this planned change of publication date, or suggestions for improvement to any aspect of the PSCG, please contact us by email at econstats.classifications@ons.gov.uk.

2 . Forward work plan

Caledonian Sleeper has been removed from the forward work plan.

3 . Classification update

Caledonian Sleeper Limited

Caledonian Sleeper Limited (CSL) provides an overnight train service for railway passengers between London and Scotland. This classification assessment followed the announcement, in October 2022 by Transport Scotland, that the Caledonian Sleeper service would transfer from Serco Caledonian Sleepers Limited to CSL, a wholly owned subsidiary of Scottish Rail Holdings Limited (SRH). The transfer of Caledonian Sleeper services took effect from 25 June 2023.

The assessment concluded that CSL has sufficient autonomy of decision to be an institutional unit in accordance with SNA 2008 4.2 and ESA 2010 2.12. The assessment further concluded that CSL is subject to public sector control. This is for reasons including that CSL is a wholly owned subsidiary of SRH, which is classified to the central government subsector (S.1311) as it is wholly owned by the Scottish Ministers. The assessment also concluded that CSL is a non-market producer, in accordance with ESA 2010 3.19, as less than 50% of its production costs are expected to be covered by sales.

Therefore, CSL has been classified to the central government subsector (S.1311) with effect from 25 June 2023, the date on which the Caledonian Sleeper services were transferred from Serco Caledonian Sleepers Limited to CSL.

Serco Caledonian Sleepers Limited

Train operating companies in England and Scotland, which entered into Emergency Measures Agreements (EMAs) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, were classified as public non-financial corporations (S. 11001). This included Serco Caledonian Sleepers Limited which operated the Caledonian Sleeper service at that time. The associated classification decision took effect from 1 April 2020, the date the EMAs came into force.

As Caledonian Sleeper services transferred to Caledonian Sleeper Limited on 25 June 2023, Serco Caledonian Sleepers Limited will be recorded as "Not in the Public Sector" on the Public Sector Classification Guide, with effect from 25 June 2023.

4 . Related links

Economic statistics classifications
Web page | Updated periodically
Classification decisions taken in recent years, documentation on the classification process and a list of entities and their classification in the UK National Accounts.

Forward work plan (XLSX, 43.7KB)
Dataset | Updated monthly
A plan which sets out the organisations and transactions that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) expects to assess and classify in the next 12 to 18 months.

Public Sector Classification Guide (XLSX, 672.8KB)
Dataset | Updated monthly
An updated guide providing a list of bodies that have been classified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as public sector bodies within the National Accounts.

5 . Cite this article

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