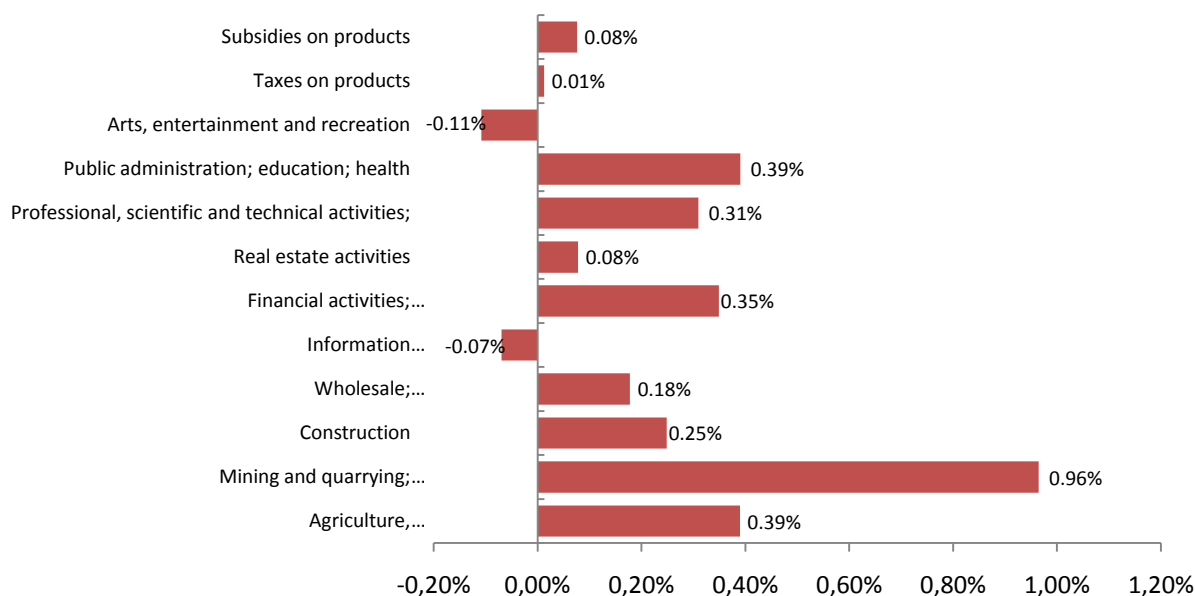


Quarterly Economic Growth

First Quarter, 2015

Tirana, July 9, 2015: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2015 in volume terms has increased by 2.82 % compared with the first quarter of 2014. The main contribution to this increase gave the branches of the economy such as *Industry, Electricity and Water* by 0.96 percentage point, *Public administration, Education and Health* by 0.39 percentage point, *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing* by 0.39 %, *Financial and insurance services* by 0.35 %, *Professional services and Administrative services* by 0.31 percentage point, *Construction* by 0.25 percentage point, *Trade Hotels and Restaurants and Transport* by 0.18 %, *Real estate services* by 0.08 %. The branches that gave a negative contribution are *Information and Communication* by -0.07 percentage point and other services by -0.11 percentage point. Taxes and subsidies on products contributed respectively by 0.01 percentage point and 0.08 percentage point.

Fig. 1 Contribution of the main branches of the economy to real growth rate of GDP (Q1_2015/Q1_2014)



The main branches of the economy for the first quarter 2015 compared with the same quarter of 2014 appeared as follows:

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing activity in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the same quarter of 2014 increased by 1.85 %.

The group of *Industry, Electricity and Water*, increased by 7.64 % in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the first quarter of 2014.

Construction activity in the first quarter of 2015 appeared to increase by 2.84 % compared with the respective quarter of 2014.

The group of *Trade, Hotels and Restaurants* and *Transport*, in the first quarter of 2015 increased by 1.18 % compared with the same quarter of 2014.

The group of *Information and Communication* decreased by 2.62 % in the current reported quarter compared with the first quarter of 2014.

Financial and insurance activity in the first quarter of 2015 had an increase by 13.07 % compared with the respective quarter of 2014.

Real estate activity in the first quarter of 2015 had an increase by 1.23 % compared with the respective quarter of 2014.

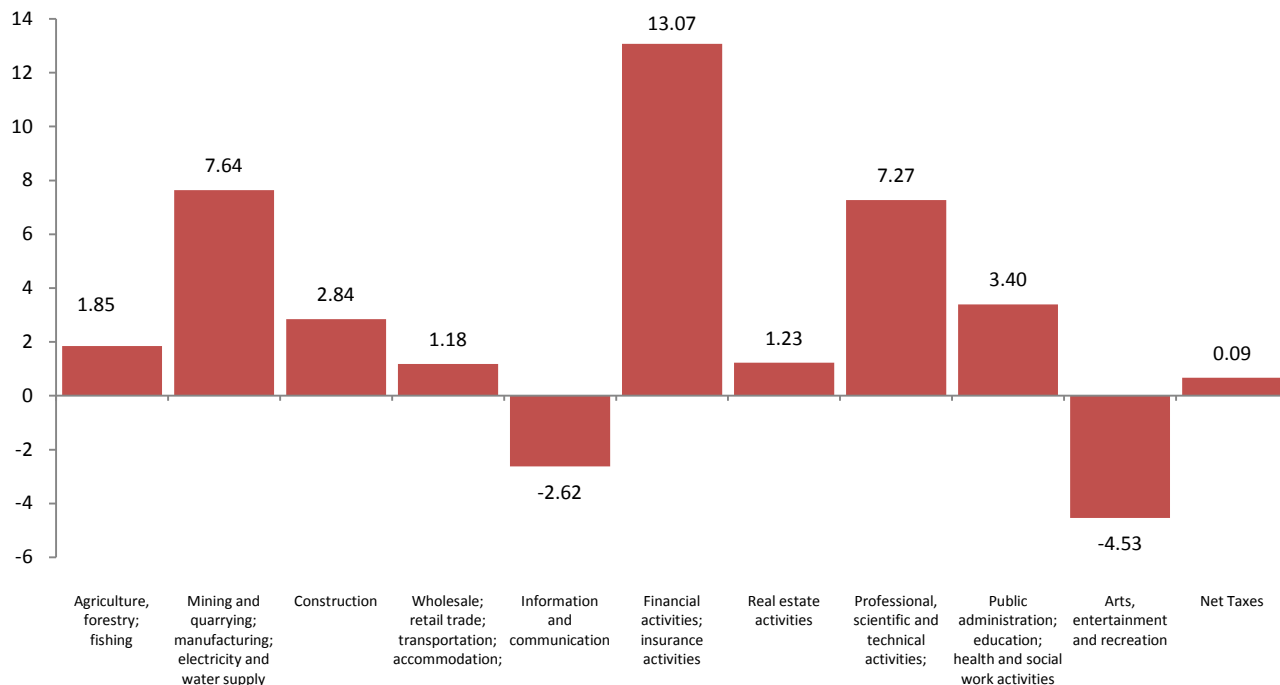
The group of *Professional services and Administrative services* appeared to increase by 7.27 % in the current reported quarter compared with the first quarter of 2014.

The group of *Public administration, Education and Health* in the first quarter of 2015 increased by 3.40 % compared with the same quarter of 2014.

The group of *Arts, entertainment and recreation services, and repair of household's good* and other services appeared to decrease by 4.53 % compared with the same quarter of 2014.

Taxes and subsidies on products in the first quarter of 2015 respectively increased by 0.09 % and decreased by 36.10 % compared with the same quarter of 2014.

Fig. 2 Changes to the same quarter of 2014 for the main branches of the economy (Q1_2015/Q1_2014)



As for changes to the preceding quarter, the indicator of Gross Domestic Product increased by 0.32 % compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing activity in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the previous quarter increased by 1.49 %.

The group of *Industry, Electricity and Water* appeared to increase by 3.34 % compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

Construction activity in the first quarter of 2015 decreased by 4.73 % compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

The Group of *Trade, Hotels and Restaurants and Transport* appeared to decrease by 0.12 % in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

The group of *Information and Communication* decreased by 0.07 % in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

Financial and insurance activity in the first quarter of 2015 increased by 6.70 % compared with the previous quarter.

Real estate activity in the first quarter of 2015 increased by 0.20 % compared with the previous quarter.

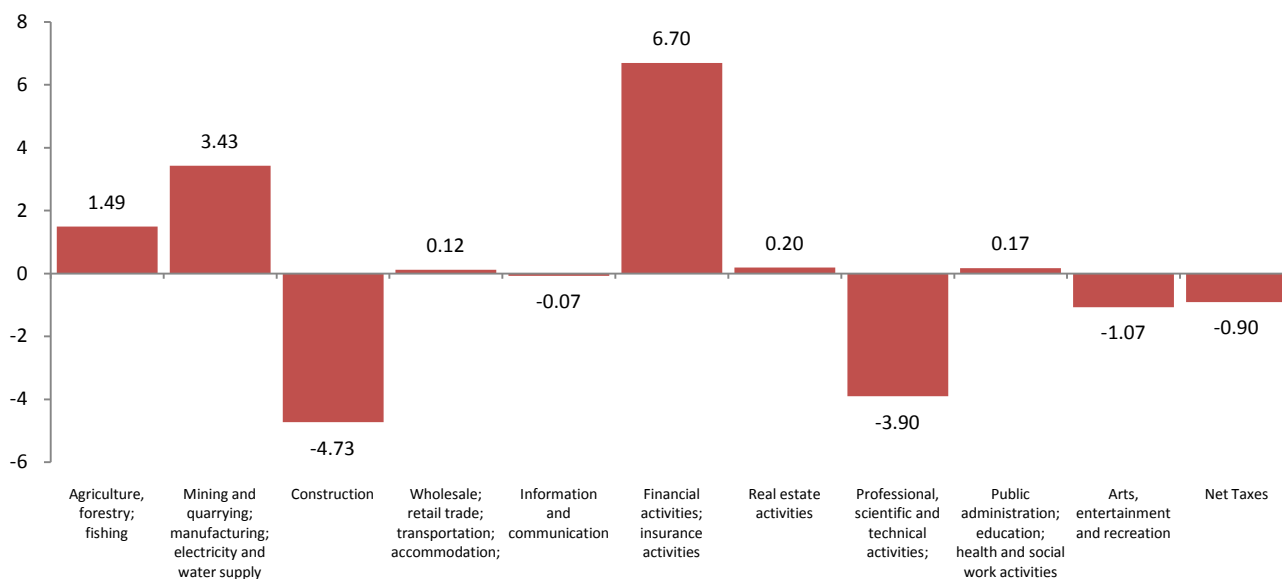
The group of *Professional services and Administrative services* appeared to increase by 3.90 % in the first quarter of 2015 compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

The group of *Public administration, Education and Health* in the first quarter of 2015 appeared to decrease by 0.17 % compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

The group of *Arts, entertainment and recreation services, repair of household's good and other services* in the first quarter of 2015 decreased by 4.53 % compared with the fourth quarter of 2014.

Taxes and subsidies on products in the first quarter of 2015 compared to the fourth quarter of 2014 respectively decreased by 1.68 % and by 47.99 percentage point.

Fig. 3 Changes to the fourth quarter of 2014 for the main branches of the economy (Q1_2015/Q4_2014)



Quarterly GDP by Expenditure Approach

INSTAT gave for the first time the estimation of quarterly time series for the main components of GDP by expenditure approach from Q1-2008 to Q1-2015, expressed in value and growth rates.

The main components for the first quarter of 2015 compared to first quarter 2014 appeared as follows:

Household final consumption which shares an important part in total economy, in the first quarter of 2015 appeared to decrease by 1.22 % compared to the first quarter of 2014.

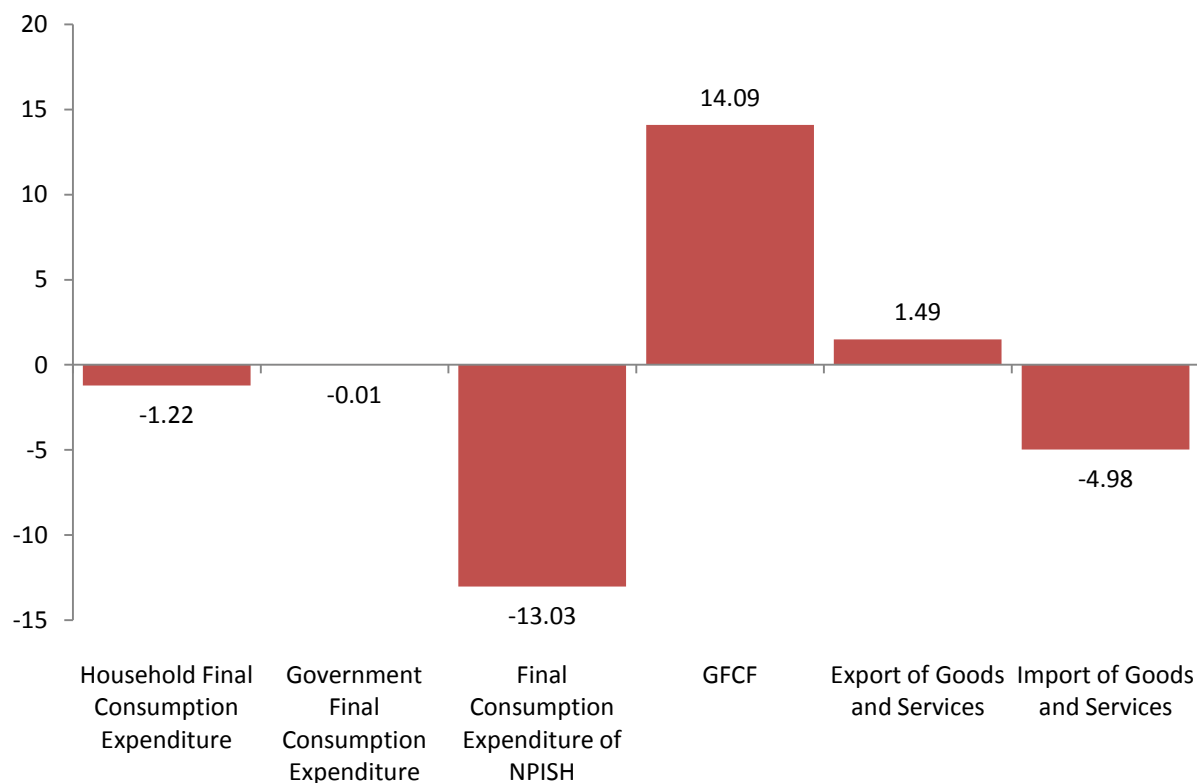
General Government consumption in the first quarter of 2015 decreased by 0.01 % compared to the first quarter of 2014.

Final consumption of non-profit institutions in the first quarter of 2015 decreased by 13.0 percentage point compared to the corresponding quarter of 2014, this component shares a small part.

Gross Fixed Capital Formation in the first quarter of 2015 increased by 14.09 % compared to the first quarter of 2014.

Exports of goods and services increased by 1.49 % compared to the first quarter of 2014 while Imports of goods and services decreased by 4.98 percentage point compared to the corresponding quarter of 2014.

Fig.4 Changes to the same quarter of 2014 for the main components of GDP by expenditure approach, (Q1_2015/Q4_2014)



Methodology

The current and constant measures of Quarterly GDP are consistent with the annual national accounts and are based on the same concepts and principles. The estimates in this publication are based on data available until June 2015. The main data sources that are used to estimate GDP are in general administrative data and various infra-annual data collected by INSTAT's surveys. The series are subject to revisions in the future as additional or improved information becomes available.

The objective of the quarterly data in time series format is to give dynamic information about the economy. The publication includes estimates of quarterly GDP at constant prices (changes in volume of the quarterly GDP) where taxes and subsidies on products are not accounted for. The volume measures are expressed at average prices of the previous year and chain-linked with the reference year, (2010=100). The estimates of quarterly GDP are compiled in both original and seasonally adjusted formats. The method used to estimate quarterly GDP is considered an indirect method.

Is considered as an indirect method because the available data sources are used to estimate quarterly value added based on the selected quarterly indicators by application of mathematical methods and statistical techniques. Specifically, the applied indirect method is based on the assumption that the proportion between the value added and output is constant within the period of estimation. In some specific branches like *Electricity, Public Administration, Education, Health and Financial Activities*, is used the direct method which estimates the output and intermediate consumption separately, with subsequent calculation of value added as a difference.

Sequence of compilation

In the indirect method the chronological order may change, but the most used is as follows:

- i. Constructing the quarterly indicators at current and constant prices from different sources for the appropriate recent periods;
- ii. Development of time series for quarterly data at current and constant prices in order to ensure data comparability and consistency over time;
- iii. Benchmarking the non-seasonally adjusted series to the relevant annual series;
- iv. Eliminating the seasonality from the aggregated quarterly time series.

It is worth mentioning that the sum of seasonally adjusted quarters is not necessarily equal to the annual GVA for any particular year. Under normal circumstances, there will be enough variation in seasonality and/or trading day effects to explain a gap between the two.

Volume measures

Quarterly National Accounts, to ensure better consistency with the Annual estimates, as well as complying with ESA 2010, the volume measure of quarterly time series are expressed in average prices of the previous year and chain-linked reference year (2010=100).

General procedure of volume measures calculation consists of two steps: First figures at current prices are converted to previous year's average prices using appropriate price indices. Figures at previous year's prices are then chain-linked, with the reference year (2010=100), in order to obtain comparable time series of volume measures over time. This approach was introduced for the first time in quarterly accounts during the publication of the first quarter 2014. In the past, different approach was applied, where current price data were converted to constant prices of the fixed base year (the base year was 2005).

Chain-linking of quarterly figures is performed using the Annual Overlap technique, i.e. figures at previous year's prices are scaled down to the average price level of the chosen reference year using annual deflators. This technique is used in the majority of member states of the European Union. Chain linking means constructing long run volume measures by cumulating movements in short term indices with different base periods. The chain-linking of quarterly GVA data with fixed reference period (2010=100) allow different periods to be compared in a consistent manner and provide measures of long-run changes. However, the users should be aware of the phenomena of (non-additivity problem) of chained data.

For example if quarterly time series of GVA at current and constant prices with average prices of the previous year are additive, where total GVA is the sum of the components, for chain linking series, with fixed reference period (2010=100) the total GVA will be non-additive.

Following international methodology, the real growth rate is estimated using quarterly chain-linked series, with the reference year 2010 (2010 = 100).

Benchmarking

The aim of benchmarking is to ensure the consistency between Quarterly and Annual National Accounts. It should be applied to both current and constant prices, where quarterly values are expressed at the same base year as the annual data. It has to be underlined that the benchmarking alters the original figures, and consequently the volume growth of the aggregates, influencing in this way the chain-linked adjusted results.

Adjustment of quarterly GVA figures (from Q1 2008 to Q4 2013), according to the revised annual data for the period from 2008 to 2013, was carried out by using the XLPBM Excel programme. The XLPBM Excel programme has been developed by the IMF and provides a set of mathematical and statistical techniques which are used for temporal disaggregation of data series. During the process of adjustment, the discrepancy between estimated quarterly data and final annual data is minimized.

The result is the achievement of consistency of quarterly and annual data, that is, the sum of quarterly data is equal to annual data in every year.

Seasonal adjustment

One of the major characteristics and issues of quarterly national accounts is seasonality. There are two methods for eliminating the seasonal effect from quarterly series.

Indirect method:

The level at which series are seasonally adjusted is important, since it has the potential to affect the quality of that seasonally adjusted series. The individual component series of the main economic variables can be seasonally adjusted and then summed to derive totals. This is called an indirect seasonal adjustment. The indirect approach has the advantage of retaining additive, but this applies only to the current price series. Although the indirect approach conceptually also provides additively for volume series.

Direct method:

Alternatively, the main economic variables can be seasonally adjusted at the total level, independently from the seasonal adjustment of their components. The adjustment of the total of an aggregate series is called a direct seasonal adjustment.

The direct approach often gives better results if the component series show similar seasonal patterns. At the most detailed level, the irregular factor may be large compared with the seasonal factor and therefore makes it difficult to perform proper seasonal adjustment.

In a small country such as Albania, irregular events can have strong impact on particular data. However, if the component series show the same seasonal pattern, aggregation often reduces the impact of the irregular factors in the component series. This is particularly relevant for Albania, where many economic series are affected by same seasonal fluctuations in the primary industries. INSTAT applied direct method for seasonal adjustment of quarterly time series.

The program used for seasonal adjustment of time series is JDemetra +, method TRAMO / SEATS, this program was developed by EUROSTAT.

Revisions policy

One of the most important moments of the quarterly series is revisions policies. These revisions are related with quarterly and annual data changes. Revisions to the previously published series may be made each quarter. The frequency and cause of these revisions are as follows:

Quarterly revisions

As additional data become available for the last quarter, they have their impact on the previous quarters because: data reported for the last quarters are supported by additional source data or improvements/corrections to data for previous nearest quarters were performed. It is necessary to mention that most of the data used for quarterly estimations are administrative data.

Including the last quarter data in the series and subsequent application of the seasonal adjustment will result in some changes to the previous quarters.

Annual revisions

Quarterly data are benchmarked to the annual one, and revisions to annual data will influence the quarterly series. Revisions to annual data are subject to arrival of new annual data sources or improvements of the existing ones. One year has three steps of estimation; flash, semi final and final. Changes that happen during these steps have their direct effect on the quarterly series. The flash estimations of the current year are available 11 months after the end of the reported year, semi final are available with a time discordance of 17 months and the final version - within 29 months. Revisions to quarterly series are linked to the production cycle of annual estimates.

Methodological revisions

Revisions of quarterly series due to changes in methodology are to the extent possible coinciding with the annual cycle of revisions outlined above.

In addition, each of the above causes of revisions, and/or the incorporation of new series in the actual quarterly series, has the potential to alter seasonal factors and therefore may lead to a revision in the seasonally adjusted series.

Information for Users

With the publication of quarterly GDP for the first quarter of 2015, INSTAT has revised the quarterly time series (Q1_2008 – Q1_2015) with the latest estimations of annual GDP published in 29 May 2015. (<http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/national-accounts/publications/books/2015/gross-domestic-product-semifinal-2013.aspx>).

Methodology and classification

The GDP estimations are harmonized with concepts and definitions of European System of Accounts (ESA 2010) and System of National Accounts (SNA 2008). Both these methodologies are the latest updates of ESA 1995 and SNA 1993. The European System of National Accounts and Regional Accounts is the framework for the measurement of economic and financial activities of the economic system, their components and the links between them for a given period of time (usually quarterly up to one year). Transactions made by the economic agents related to other resident or non-resident units in an economic territory are object of measurements in National Accounts.

The classifications used in the National Accounts are as follow:

- Nomenclature of the economic activities REV.2 (NACE Rev.2).
- Nomenclature of Products by Activity (CPA);
- Classification of individual consumption by purpose (COICOP);
- Classification of the functions of the government (COFOG).

The classification of the economic activities NACE Rev.2 is essential for the production, compilation and the distribution of the statistics. This classification is revised several times to reflect the economic developments, technological and structural changes in the economy and to enable comparison and data connection at European level, also worldwide, as a part of an integrated system. The new classification NACE Rev.2 represents the highest levels of classification and new details that reflect different forms of production and emerging industries (refer to Annex 1 for details about the two classifications)

The main changes brought by the new classification of economic activities, are as follows:

- a. Under the old classification (NACE Rev. 1) the activities of "Publishing, printing and reproduction of recorded media" correspond with the branch "Manufacture of wood, paper, furniture, printing and publishing". In the new classification (NACE Rev. 2) "Publishing activities" is included in the branch "Publishing, audiovisual and broadcasting activities" as a separate branch.

b. In the branch "Construction" according to NACE Rev. 2 except of "Construction" activity in NACE Rev 1.1 which is included as so, are also included "Specialized construction works" which in NACE Rev. 1.1 was included in the branch "real estate activities".

c. Postal and communication activities, corresponding to NACE Rev. 1.1, with branch "Postal and telecommunications", are detailed in two separate activities according to NACE Rev. 2, the branch "Postal and courier activities" and the branch "Telecommunications".

d. "Sewage and refuse disposal, sanitation and similar activities" in NACE Rev.2 coincide with the branch "Other community, social and personal service activities" in NACE Rev 1.1. With the new classification this activity passed from services sector to the industry sector.

e. Part of the "Trade" activities under NACE Rev 1.1, more concretely the "Repair of personal and household goods" has been transferred to branch "Other service activities, activities of households" according to NACE Rev. 2.

Definitions

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Gross Domestic Product at market prices, is the final result of production activity of productive resident units during a year. It is calculated in two approaches:

- **GDP according to production approach** is equal to sum of gross added values relevant to different kinds of activities, adding taxes and subtracting subsidies on products (not distributed to sectors or branches of a certain activity);

- **GDP according to expenditure approach** is equal to final domestic usage of products and services (final consumption, gross fixed capital formation, changes in inventories), plus exports, minus imports.

Output: production is an activity carried out under the control, responsibility and management of an institutional unit that uses inputs of labour, capital and goods and services to produce outputs of goods and services. The total of products created during the accounting period is considered as output. There are three types of output such as: market output; output produced for own final use; non-market output.

Intermediate consumption: Intermediate consumption consists of goods and services consumed as inputs by a process of production, excluding fixed assets whose consumption is recorded as consumption of fixed capital. The goods and services are either transformed or used up by the production services.

Gross Value Added: Gross Value Added represents the contribution of different activities in GDP and is calculated as the difference between the output and intermediate consumption.

Nominal GDP: measures the current market value of a country's gross domestic product.

Real GDP: measures the volume level of a gross domestic product after changes in prices have been taken into account. It is obtained by expressing values in terms of a base period or previous period prices.

Taxes on products and imports: Taxes on products are paid taxes per unit of some goods and services like the Value Added Tax, excise and customs' tax on imports. Subsidies on products and imports:

Subsidies on products are non-reverse payment made by public administration units to the companies in the form of a certain amount of money per unit of goods or services. Subsidies on imports consist in subsidies of goods or services payable when the product surpasses the border of economic territory or if the services were made to resident institutional units.

Basic prices: is the price receivable by the producer from the purchaser for a unit of a good or services produced as output, minus any tax payable and plus any subsidy receivable on product. It excludes any transport charges invoiced separately by the producer.

Market prices: is the price after adding taxes and deducting subsidies on products.

Current prices: Prices of reference period. They represent the price paid for goods and services during the time of production or consumption.

Constant prices: Estimation in constant prices represents the estimation in real terms, deflated with prices of a base year or of the previous year.