

“Measuring intangible capital in the Netherlands”

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Abstract

Anticipating the upcoming revision of the SNA (SNA 93 Rev.1) the capitalisation of R&D at Statistics Netherlands has been incorporated in a recently developed satellite account called the ‘knowledge module’. Conceptual and measurement issues encountered in the process of capitalising R&D include among other things:

- a) The transformation of Frascati based survey data to figures that follow national accounting conventions;
- b) The internationalisation of R&D: problems measuring R&D export and import;
- c) Freely available R&D: the determination of what to include and what to exclude;
- d) The estimation of R&D service lives: currently based on patent data.

Although substantial, the measurement issues with regard to R&D may seem minor when compared to those concerning intangibles such as brand equity, firm specific human capital and organizational structure. Current research in the context of the Dutch knowledge module is concentrated around the measurement and capitalization of this broader range of intangible assets. The first aim of this research is to explore measurement issues. In particular, the usefulness of innovation statistics at present for the measurement of these intangibles in the context of the National accounts is being investigated. The results of this research together with experiences in translating R&D source statistics to National account estimates are described in the paper. These will be followed by recommended (future) changes in R&D and innovation surveys from the perspective of compiling macro figures on intangible investment.

Another aim of the current research is to tentatively estimate the contribution of different types of intangible capital (including those already included in the National accounts) to output growth in the Netherlands. For this purpose a broader range of intangible assets are incorporated in the KLEMS productivity framework of Statistics Netherlands.