

Belgium

Annual Observance Report of the Special Data Dissemination Standard for 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The IMF's work on data dissemination standards began in October 1995, when the Interim Committee (now the International Monetary and Financial Committee) endorsed the establishment by the IMF of standards to guide members in the dissemination to the public of their economic and financial data. The standards were to consist of two tiers: the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) to guide countries that have, or that might seek, access to international capital markets, and the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) to assist all other member countries. The IMF Executive Board approved the SDDS in March 1996, and has since conducted periodic reviews of the SDDS, making changes to maintain relevance as developments warrant. The Executive Board authorized annual reports of subscribers' observance of their SDDS undertakings in March 1999 after the Second Review of the Special Data Dissemination Standard, which also implemented a new requirement that subscribing countries disseminate a data template on international reserves and foreign currency liquidity.
2. This observance report follows in three additional parts. Part II summarizes a subscriber's SDDS undertakings. Part III reviews the subscribing country's observance of SDDS requirements during the reference year, and Part IV provides information, as available, on the quality of the subscriber's statistical processes for compiling and disseminating the data.

II. SDDS UNDERTAKINGS

3. In subscribing to the SDDS, countries undertake several measures to document their data dissemination practices to the international public. This report covers observance of SDDS undertakings. It follows the legal text governing the SDDS, contained in the Annex to the text of the founding 1996 Executive Board decision.¹ The Annex refers to the four metadata dimensions (Data, Access by the Public, Integrity, and Quality) of the SDDS and to the Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB):
4. Under the Data dimension (Sections II.1 and III.3 of the Annex):
 - **Coverage:** Subject to the applicable "as relevant" coverage flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber, subscribers must disseminate to the public

¹ Posted on the internet at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sd/index.asp?decision=EBM/96/36>

all prescribed components of all prescribed data categories.² The report takes special note of the subscriber's coverage of the prescribed components for the data template on international reserves and foreign currency liquidity (reserves template) and for external debt.

- **Periodicity:** Subject to the periodicity flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber, subscribers must release all prescribed components of all prescribed data categories with at least the prescribed periodicity. The report takes special note of the subscriber's observance of the periodicity requirements for the reserves template and for external debt.
- **Timeliness:** Subject to the timeliness flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber, subscribers must release all prescribed components of all prescribed data categories with at least the prescribed timeliness. The report takes special note of the subscriber's observance of the timeliness requirements for the reserves template and for external debt. *All timeliness information in this report is based on release dates detected from the national summary data page (see below) that the subscriber maintains.*

5. Under the **Access by the Public** dimension (Sections II.2 and III.3 of the Annex):

- **Advance release calendar (ARC):** Subscribers must disseminate an ARC for all prescribed components of all prescribed data categories (subject to the “as relevant” coverage flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber, and data released with daily frequency), whether or not periodicity or timeliness flexibility options are taken, at least three months in advance of release.
 - ARCs are to be reported to the IMF covering a future period from three months to one year, with a frequency sufficient to provide release dates at least three calendar months in advance of the current date.
 - ARCs may be revised after dissemination but should provide the date of data release no later than the Friday preceding the day of release.
 - ARCs must be reported in an electronic format the IMF determines.
 - This report refers to timeliness against the ARC as “punctuality” to distinguish it from timeliness against SDDS requirements. *All punctuality information in this*

² “As relevant” coverage flexibility may be available to a subscriber, subject to IMF staff approval, for components of the following categories:

Production index: Breakdowns by industrial, primary commodity, or sector, as relevant.

Labor market: Employment, unemployment, and wages/earnings, as relevant.

Central government debt: Breakdowns by domestic and foreign holders, as relevant, with a breakdown by currency (including indexed), as relevant, and a breakdown by maturity; debt guaranteed by central government, as relevant.

Stock market: Share price index, as relevant.

Exchange rates: Spot rates and three- and six-month forward market rates, as relevant.

report is based on release dates detected from the national summary data page (see below) that the subscriber maintains and the ARC the subscriber reports to the IMF.

6. Under the **DSBB** (Section III.2 of the Annex):

- **National summary data page (NSDP):** Subscribers must post a table on a national webpage to which the DSBB is linked containing for all prescribed components of all prescribed data categories (subject to coverage flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber) the reference period of the latest release and the value of the latest and most recent previous releases.
- NSDPs must follow format and layout requirements determined by the IMF that allow the staff to detect releases by electronically scanning the NSDP.
- Among these electronic monitoring requirements, for the prescribed data template on international reserves and foreign currency liquidity, as well as the table on external debt, the NSDP may link to another electronic document containing a table with the prescribed components; however, the NSDP must contain the reference period of the table that contains the current release and is the target of such a link.

7. Under the Integrity Dimension (Section III.2 of the Annex):

- **Metadata certification:** Every calendar quarter, subscribers must certify that the information posted on the DSBB is correct within three (local and IMF) working days after the end of the quarter, and update metadata the subscriber deems incorrect at the certification time within an additional five (local and IMF) working days of the end of the quarter. The metadata posted on the DSBB include,
 - The ARC.
 - Descriptions of compilation and dissemination practices for the Data, Access by the Public, Integrity, and Quality dimensions, as well as the six aspects Summary Methodology, for each data category the SDDS prescribes, subject to any “as relevant” coverage flexibility options allowed by the SDDS and exercised by the subscriber.
 - User contact and data release formats information.

8. In making an overall assessment whether a subscriber is in observance of the SDDS, staff will follow a graduated approach that distinguishes between minor and serious deviations from a subscriber’s SDDS undertakings.

III. OBSERVANCE OF THE SDDS BY BELGIUM DURING 2007

9. Belgium subscribed to the SDDS on June 06, 1996 and met all SDDS requirements on January 26, 2001. The Summary of Observance table³ on the DSBB shows Belgium's dissemination policy concerning periodicity and timeliness of SDDS prescribed data categories and their components, as well as the flexibility options allowed under the SDDS that it has exercised, if any. According to the Summary of Observance, these policies have been in observance of the SDDS since the time of subscription. The following sections review Belgium's dissemination practices against SDDS requirements in 2007.

A. Data Dimension Undertakings

Coverage

10. Belgium took no "as relevant" coverage flexibility options.
11. During 2007, Belgium met the SDDS requirements for coverage for all data categories.

Reserves template

Belgium disseminated all the prescribed components for the reserves template.

External debt

Belgium disseminated all the prescribed components for the external debt template.

Periodicity

12. As shown on the Summary of Observance at <http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatsoolist?strcode=BEL>, Belgium did not use flexibility options for periodicity.
13. Belgium exceeded the SDDS periodicity requirements for⁴
- Labor market: Unemployment
 - Central government debt
14. During 2007, Belgium met the SDDS periodicity requirements for all data categories.

Reserves template

Belgium met the SDDS monthly periodicity requirement for all months.

³<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatsoolist?strcode=BEL>

⁴ Exceeds means that Belgium announced a dissemination period that is more frequent than the one prescribed by the SDDS.

External debt

Belgium met the SDDS quarterly periodicity requirement for all quarters.

Timeliness

15. Table 1 shows for each prescribed data category how well Belgium met the SDDS requirement for timeliness. To provide context, the table also shows the disseminated periodicity and indicates whether it exceeded the SDDS requirement.
16. As shown on the Summary of Observance at <http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatsoolist?strcode=BEL>, Belgium did not use flexibility options for timeliness.
17. Belgium exceeded the SDDS timeliness requirements for⁵
 - National accounts
 - Forward-looking indicators
 - Labor market: Employment
 - Labor market: Unemployment
 - Labor market: Wages/Earnings
 - General government or public sector operations
 - Central government debt
 - Reserves template
 - Merchandise trade
18. During 2007, Belgium met the SDDS requirements for timeliness for most of the data categories except for the following data categories
 - Production index (occasional short delays)
 - Analytical accounts of the banking sector (a short delay)

Reserves template

Belgium met the monthly timeliness requirement for all months.

External debt

Belgium met the quarterly timeliness requirement for all quarters.

⁵ Exceeds means that Belgium announced a dissemination lag that was better (shorter) than the one prescribed by the SDDS.

B. Access Dimension Undertakings

Advance Release Calendar

19. During 2007, Belgium met the SDDS requirements for ARC in all months.

Punctuality

20. Table 2 shows for each prescribed data category how well Belgium met the SDDS requirements for punctuality against its ARC. To provide context, the table also shows the disseminated periodicity and indicates whether it exceeds the SDDS requirement. The table also shows Belgium's policy on release lags for each data category, as shown in its SDDS metadata.

21. During 2007, Belgium met the punctuality requirement for most of the data categories except for the following data categories

- Analytical accounts of the banking sector (a short delay)
- Central government operations (a short delay)
- Production index (a short delay)
- Merchandise trade (occasional short delays)
- Population (a short delay)
- Price index: Producer prices (a short delay)
- Labor market: Unemployment (occasional short delays)
- Central government debt (occasional early dissemination)

C. Dissemination standards bulletin board undertakings

National summary data page

22. Belgium displayed the SDDS-prescribed components on its NSDP or showed them via hyperlinks on webpages. Belgium posts on the NSDP the reference period of linked tables for the Data Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity, External Debt, and International Investment Position.

D. Integrity dimension undertakings

Metadata certification

23. Table 3 shows for each prescribed data category how well Belgium met the SDDS timeliness requirements for quarterly certification of its metadata on the DSBB. The table also shows the timeliness of metadata updates if, at the time of quarterly certification, Belgium informed the staff the metadata posted on the DSBB was incorrect

24. During 2007, Belgium met the SDDS requirements for certification for all quarters.

IV. DATA QUALITY DIMENSION UNDERTAKINGS

25. During 2007, Belgium provided available information on the methodology, sources, and reconciliation of data categories in Data Quality Assessment Framework that would facilitate users to assess the quality of the data.
26. Belgium has not yet received a mission to produce a Data module of the Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (data ROSC) through which the IMF assesses in detail the quality of the statistical systems of its member countries.

The Statistical Appendix of the Article IV staff report of March 2008 (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.cfm?sk=21834.0>) stated that: “Belgium’s economic and financial statistics are adequate for surveillance purposes.”

Table 1. Belgium, 2007: Timeliness Against SDDS Requirements

Unshaded cells reflect SDDS prescribed periodicity; entries in shaded cells reflect cases where SDDS prescribed periodicity is exceeded or where flexibility options are used.
 √ – SDDS requirement met; × – data were not disseminated and/or no ARC release dates provided; negative numeric entry – number of days dissemination was later than timeliness requirement.

Data Category	National Periodicity	Prescribed Release Lag	Reference Period																
			Prev yr	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q1	Apr	May	Jun	Q2	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q3	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q4
Real Sector																			
National accounts	Q	1Q					√				√				√				√
Production index	M	6W		√	√	√		√	√	√		-2	√	-2		√	-14	-11	
Labor market: Employment	Q	1Q					√				√				√				-30
Labor market: Unemployment	M *	1Q		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Labor market: Wages/Earnings	Q	1Q					√				√				√				√
Price index: Consumer prices	M	1M		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Price index: Producer prices	M	1M		√	√	√		√	√	-2		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Fiscal Sector																			
General government or public sector operat	A	2Q	√																
Central government operations	M	1M		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Central government debt	M *	1Q		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Financial Sector																			
Analytical accounts of the banking sector	M	1M		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	-3	√	
Analytical accounts of the central bank	M	2W		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Interest rates	D	1D																	
Stock market: Share price index	D	1D																	
External Sector																			
Balance of payments	Q	1Q					√				√				√				√
Official reserve assets	M	1W		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Reserves template†	M	1M		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
Merchandise trade	M	8W		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	
International investment position	A	3Q	√																
External debt	Q	1Q					√				√				√				√
Exchange rates	D	1D																	
Socio-demographic Data																			
Population	A	...																	

* – Exceeds SDDS requirement; PF – Periodicity flexibility option taken; TF – Timeliness flexibility option taken; SF – Special timeliness flexibility option taken; TT – Targeted timeliness flexibility option taken; RPF – "As relevant" flexibility option taken for periodicity; RTF – "As relevant" flexibility option taken for timeliness; D – day; WD – working day; W – week; F – fortnight; M – month; Q – quarter; SA – semi-annual; A – annual; NLT – not later than; † – Data Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity.

Table 2. Belgium, 2007: Punctuality Against the Advance Release Calendar

Unshaded cells reflect SDDS prescribed periodicity; entries in shaded cells reflect cases where SDDS prescribed periodicity is exceeded or where flexibility options are used.
 √ – data were released on the date shown on the advance release calendar (ARC); × – data were not disseminated and/or no ARC release dates provided; NYD – data not yet disseminated;
 positive numeric entry – number of days dissemination was earlier than the release date on the ARC; negative numeric entry – number of days dissemination was later than the release date on the ARC.

Data Category	National Periodicity	National Release Lag	Reference Period															
			Prev yr	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q1	Apr	May	Jun	Q2	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q3	Oct	Nov	Dec
Real Sector																		
National accounts	Q	70D *-SF					√				√				√			√
Production index	M	6W		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	-5		√	√	√
Forward-looking indicators	M	3W *		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Labor market: Employment	Q	NLT 70D *					√				√				√			√
Labor market: Unemployment	M *	5WD *		√	√	-6		4	√	√		√	√	-4		√	-6	-23
Labor market: Wages/Earnings	Q	6W *					√				√				√			√
Price index: Consumer prices	M	1 M		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Price index: Producer prices	M	NLT 1M		-6	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Fiscal Sector																		
General government or public sector operations	A	3M *	√															
Central government operations	M	1M		√	√	-3		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	4	√
Central government debt	M *	1M *		15	15	8		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	4	√
Financial Sector																		
Analytical accounts of the banking sector	M	1M		√	√	-3		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Analytical accounts of the central bank	M	2W		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Interest rates	D	1 WD																
Stock market: Share price index	D	D																
External Sector																		
Balance of payments	Q	1Q					√				√				√			√
Official reserve assets	M	5WD		√	√	2		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√
Reserves template†	M	24D *		2	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√		√	5	√
Merchandise trade	M	6W *		√	-2	√		√	√	√		-3	√	√		√	√	√
International investment position	A	9M	6															
External debt	Q	1Q					√				√				√			√
Exchange rates	D	D																
Socio-demographic Data																		
Population	A	6 M	-5															

* – Exceeds SDDS requirement; PF – Periodicity flexibility option taken; TF – Timeliness flexibility option taken; SF – Special timeliness flexibility option taken; TT – Targeted timeliness flexibility option taken; RPF – "As relevant" flexibility option taken for periodicity; RTF – "As relevant" flexibility option taken for timeliness; D – day; WD – working day; W – week; F – fortnight; M – month; Q – quarter; SA – semi-annual; A – annual; NLT – not later than; † – Data Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity.

Table 3. Belgium, 2007: Metadata Certification and Update

√ – SDDS requirement met; × – no SDDS metadata certification;
negative numeric entry – number of days late.

Data Category	Metadata Certification				Metadata Update			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Real Sector								
National accounts	√	√	√	√				
Production index	√	√	√	√				
Forward-looking indicators	√	√	√	√				
Labor market: Employment	√	√	√	√				
Labor market: Unemployment	√	√	√	√				
Labor market: Wages/Earnings	√	√	√	√				
Price index: Consumer prices	√	√	√	√				
Price index: Producer prices	√	√	√	√				
Fiscal Sector								
General government or public sector operations	√	√	√	√				
Central government operations	√	√	√	√				
Central government debt	√	√	√	√				
Financial Sector								
Analytical accounts of the banking sector	√	√	√	√				
Analytical accounts of the central bank	√	√	√	√				
Interest rates	√	√	√	√				
Stock market: Share price index	√	√	√	√				
External Sector								
Balance of payments	√	√	√	√				
International reserves and foreign currency liquidity	√	√	√	√				
Merchandise trade	√	√	√	√				
International investment position	√	√	√	√				
External debt	√	√	√	√				
Exchange rates	√	√	√	√				
Socio-demographic Data								
Population	√	√	√	√				