

**ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY OF SPANISH REGIONAL
ACCOUNTS (CRE-95)**

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ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY OF SPANISH REGIONAL ACCOUNTS (CRE-95)

Verónica Cañal Fernández*

Abstract

Are estimates accurate? Are these data reliable? Questions like these are important to the producers and users of any set of statistics. This article studies the accuracy and reliability in the Gross Value Added (GVA) at basic prices, 1995 Base. All these tasks were developed within the Spanish Regional Accounts (CRE-95) by means of a revision method. This method claims that the proximity of the first estimate to the definitive one can be a clue as to its quality. Many studies investigate the magnitude and nature of errors contained throughout the National Account System estimates; however, economic literature offers no option for judging accuracy and reliability in the main regional account aggregates, and so the methodology proposed by Mankiw *et al.* (1984) and Mankiw and Shapiro (1986) is adopted to assess the accuracy and reliability of the review process during 1999 in the GVA at basic prices according to Autonomous Communities (NUTS-2). This study analyzes five approaches that shed light on the accuracy and reliability of these revisions: examination of statistical measures of sampling biases, variances, comparison with other revisions) and analysis of revisions.

Key words: Spanish Regional Accounts; Gross Value Added; Accuracy; Reliability; Revisions.

JEL Classification: C10; E00; E01.

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1. Introduction

This article presents *prima facie* evidence for the accuracy and reliability in the Spanish Regional Account System, 1995 Base (CRE-95). The concern lies mainly with data regarding Gross Value Added because they form the basis for the calculation of regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is currently a core variable within the context of European Union funds. Because of administrative use of regional account estimates for the eligibility for regions objective 1 of the Structural Funds, requirements for the accuracy of regional GVA are high. Apart from this specific purpose, European statisticians have to comply with the quality commitment as recently laid down in the European Statistics Code of Practice. In Spain, the evolution in regional economy is attracting remarkable interest and has become a demanding agenda for the National Statistics Institute (INE) to estimate the main regional account aggregates in order to satisfy the users' basic needs. As a result, a methodology to assess the quality of sequential estimate process in the GVA at basic prices is proposed, offering the users information on the accuracy and reliability needed to guarantee subsequent estimates. The information used by way of a foundation belongs to the first estimate: the provisional, advance and definitive one for GVA in 1999 expressed in growth rates.

As a framework, this research uses the study carried out by Mankiw et al. [1984] and Mankiw and Shapiro [1986] on the estimates review of the quarterly Gross National Product in the United States from 1975 to 1982. In this approach, the underlying idea is that the closeness of the earlier to the final estimate review should indicate the highest estimate quality. Although this does not solve the problems of accuracy and reliability, this method is an initial approach to ascertain whether the first estimates are suitably oriented according to the final results- that is to say, if the first estimates are efficient approaches to the definitive results.

The accuracy of estimate analysis is based on comparison between the initial estimate and the definitive one (it refers to the entire measurement error), whereas the reliability analysis consists of assessing the successive revisions of estimates in the GVA- that is, to compare each estimate with the next closest one (assessing reliability refers to revisions and to the closeness of the initial estimated value(s) to the subsequent estimate values). Although accuracy and reliability are not necessarily related, they are connected through revisions. When estimates are subject to consistent revisions, the magnitude of the estimated error is smaller (statistics become more reliable) and the estimate approaches a real value (statistics should be exact).

With this aim in mind Mankiw and Shapiro introduce the possibility of news (new information) and noise.

This article is organized as follows. In the second section I briefly describe the major source of data used to estimate GVA and the timing of the GVA revisions. The data analyzed in the remainder of the article are also described.

Mankiw, Runkle and Shapiro's methodology (MRS) is described in the third section, which in the fourth section is used to characterize the GVA revision process by two polar cases labelled news and noise. I show that the information content in the early estimates is less than one might suppose. In particular, the standard deviation of the revision of GVA growth is consistent with the hypothesis that earlier estimates are efficient predictions of subsequent estimates, given that the standard deviation increases from the first estimate.

The final section contains the main conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis. This finding implies that the preliminary estimates are efficient given the available information- that is to say, every new figure is generally the best available estimate of the final value considering the available information at that time. Hence, it is also possible to affirm that INE uses the right statistical procedure to carry out the regional estimates.

2. The relevance of Spanish National Accounts

One of the main objectives of the research was to examine the accuracy and reliability of regional GVA which is used in the process of calculating regional GDP, which in turn feeds into calculations used to determine the allocation of Structural Funds, i.e. based on the 75% rule. Eurostat currently uses a straight-line nowcast to project forward a region's share of national GVA, and then uses more up-to-date national accounts to infer the level of regional output. However, such a methodology ignores any past movement in a regional structure, i.e. a region could have a rapidly rising (falling) share of national output, and yet this is not taken into account when projecting forward to the year needed for policy analysis. Indeed, the method is akin to assuming that regional GVA structure is characterised by a random walk, whereas the best one period ahead forecast that can be achieved is the level in the current period.

The first studies of Spanish Regional Accounts were produced due to the considerable demand for regional information that followed the creation of the *Estado de las Autonomías* outlined in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. This would allow the different Autonomous Communities to assume, among others, political, economic and

social responsibilities. Hence, regional policy has become of great importance and has made a contribution on a national level.

Furthermore, the Constitution specifies a new model for income distribution that recommends harmonious development between the different regions, reducing the differences between them (Article 131.1. *The State shall be empowered to plan general economic activity by an act in order to meet collective needs, to balance and harmonize regional and sectorial development and to stimulate the growth of income and wealth and their more equitable distribution*).

Consequently, it is necessary to implement mechanisms for financing the regions in order to develop the responsibilities delegated to the different territories by the State and to correct any imbalances in income between them. The *Ley Orgánica de Financiación de las Comunidades Autónomas* (LOFCA) was enacted in 1980 to achieve these objectives.

This law established different ways for financing the regions based, for example, on the levying of taxes by the State or in different agreements with the regions. Moreover, it provided different tools for interregional solidarity that permit the redistribution of income between the different regions and the correction of regional imbalances. In order to achieve this, the *Fondo de Compensación Interterritorial* (FCI) was created to finance a part of public investment expenditure in the comparatively less developed regions, stimulating the creation of income and wealth. Initially, all regions had access to it, but nowadays, only those that are within Objective 1¹, or are being phased-out of it, have access to the Fund. The introduction of the Single European Act in 1987 meant a strengthening of economic policy on a European level, establishing the principle of social and economic cohesion via aid to the countries and regions with a lower level of income per inhabitant (Objective 1). The need for macroeconomic information from the different regions strengthened the development of regional accounts, which were established in a similar way in all the countries of the European Union.

3. The data

In order to conduct our empirical analysis, I needed to carry out observations of data revisions. This required observing both the current or revised version of the data as well as the data as it was initially announced by the statistical institute.

Within the scope of Spanish statistics the INE is responsible for carrying out official Regional Accounting. This represents the Spanish Regional Account series, 1995 base

¹ Regions with a GDP per inhabitant below 75 per cent of the European average.

from the year 2000. In every Autonomous Community (seventeen Spanish regions), all the estimates for 1999 were compiled on this base and the nominal and real growth for the GVA were worked out. Finally, revisions were calculated following this procedure².

To carry out Spanish Regional Accounts according to the previously agreed agenda, 5 years were needed in order to turn the data into a definitive estimate. An illustration of the review in the added process is shown in Table 1 and Table 2, and provides a visualization of the existing connections between publication periods among several estimates. The timetable established for one year results t, is as follows:

- The first approximate estimate (E) for the year 1999 was published in August in the year t+1-that is to say in 2000.
- The approximate advance estimate (A) for the year 1999 was published in July in the year t+2- that is to say in 2001.
- The provisional estimates (P1, P2) for the year 1999 were published in July in the years t+3 and t+4, therefore they correspond to 2002 and 2003.
- The final estimate (D) for the year 1999 was published in July in the year t+5- that is to say in 2004.

Table 1. Timetable established for CRE-95

Published in 2000	Published in 2001	Published in 2002	Published in 2003	Published in 2004
1995 (P2)	1995 (D)	1997 (D)	1998 (D)	1999 (D)
1996 (P2)	1996 (D)	1998 (P2)	1999 (P2)	2000 (P2)
1997 (P1)	1997 (P2)	1999 (P1)	2000 (P1)	2001 (P1)
1998 (A)	1998 (P1)	2000 (A)	2001 (A)	2002 (A)
1999 (1 ^a E)	1999 (A)	2001 (1 ^a E)	2002 (1 ^a E)	2003 (1 ^a E)
	2000 (1 ^a E)			
Excel file (.xls)	Excel file (.xls)	Excel file (.xls)	Excel file (.xls) Pc-Axis ³ file (.px)	Excel file (.xls) Pc-Axis file (.px)

² The data base is available to anybody who wants to use it.

³ PC-Axis is a program developed for the handling of statistical tables. It provides versatile possibilities for editing even large tables, changing their structures, performing calculations or converting file formats. National Statistics Institute (INE) offers a number of charged and free services for retrieving data from its databases via the Internet onto the user's own PC in PC-Axis format.

Table 2. Schedule of GVA estimates

Name of estimate	Timing of estimate	Variable name
First estimate	July 2000	E
Advance estimate	July 2001	A
First provisional estimate	July 2002	P1
Second provisional estimate	July 2003	P2
Definitive	July 2004	D

The timetable set for this structural statistical product is mainly characterised by the fact that the estimates are subject to a process of revision and breakdown until they become the definitive ones. This process is determined by the regional account process dependency and at the same time by the results in the National Accounts and basic statistical information.

In order to characterize statistical revisions of the GVA at basic prices (constant and current prices) estimates, the following notation is used to analyze the growth rates that are calculated from the Spanish Regional Accounts estimates according to level.

I analyze five estimates of the GVA growth rates (see Table 3). Table 4 shows the inter-annual growth rates in GVA at current and constant prices calculated from the series according to level: the first estimate in the year 1999 is calculated from the advance estimate in 1998, the growth rate in the advance estimate in the year 1999 is calculated from the first provisional estimate in the year 1998, the ones from the first provisional estimate in the year 1999 from the second provisional estimate in the year 1998, the growth rate in the second provisional estimate in 1999 from the definitive estimate in 1998 and finally, the growth rate in the definitive estimate in the year 1999 is calculated from the definitive estimate in the year 1998.

$$\Delta GVA = \left(\frac{GVA_t - GVA_{t-1}}{GVA_{t-1}} \right) * 100$$

(1)

Table 3. Definition of variables

GVA_i^D	Definitive estimate of GVA growth rate for the Autonomous Region i .
GVA_i^I	Initial estimate GVA growth rate for the Autonomous Region i , where $I = E, I = A, I = P1$ or $I = P2$.
R_i	Revisions, difference between successive revisions (in terms of reliability) or difference between initial and definitive estimates (in terms of accuracy).
TE	First estimate of GVA growth rate.
TA	Advance estimate of GVA growth rate.
TP1	First provisional estimate of GVA growth rate.
TP2	Second provisional estimate of GVA growth rate.
TD	Definitive estimate of GVA growth rate.

Table 4. GVA interannual growth rates for 1999 (%)

Autonomous Communities	Current (C)					Constant (K)				
	TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD	TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD
Andalucía	6.00	7.15	6.90	6.58	6.17	3.15	4.53	4.14	4.27	3.87
Aragón	6.30	4.36	4.62	4.65	4.07	3.16	2.05	2.38	2.67	2.05
Asturias (Principado de)	6.19	4.26	3.31	2.58	1.85	2.84	1.77	1.11	0.75	0.18
Balears (Illes)	7.31	5.45	6.07	9.05	8.99	3.45	2.29	2.84	4.72	4.52
Canarias	7.08	7.85	7.93	10.17	10.01	3.61	4.88	4.70	6.47	6.16
Cantabria	6.61	7.57	8.43	7.99	7.03	3.50	4.55	5.31	5.03	4.18
Castilla y León	5.96	5.50	5.71	5.69	5.62	2.91	2.74	3.23	3.48	3.47
Castilla-La Mancha	5.64	3.09	4.04	3.45	4.53	2.72	0.51	1.06	0.84	2.09
Cataluña	6.10	6.09	6.69	6.28	6.42	3.30	3.76	4.04	3.99	4.02
Comunidad Valenciana	6.41	6.58	6.61	6.44	6.35	3.72	4.01	3.99	4.19	4.08
Extremadura	6.22	7.78	7.97	7.72	7.50	2.77	4.76	5.74	5.46	5.14
Galicia	6.26	5.65	5.28	5.37	5.95	3.12	3.25	3.11	3.35	4.09
Madrid (Comunidad de)	6.17	7.11	6.69	6.24	6.49	2.88	4.64	4.60	4.03	4.21
Murcia (Región de)	6.22	5.54	5.52	5.22	6.04	3.34	2.84	3.06	3.05	3.89
Navarra (Comunidad Foral de)	5.84	5.27	4.78	4.79	5.27	2.94	3.34	2.94	2.95	3.43
País Vasco	6.05	6.72	6.84	7.20	7.26	2.96	4.21	4.58	4.78	4.90
Rioja (La)	6.00	3.87	4.21	5.92	6.04	3.38	1.38	1.84	2.60	2.86
Ceuta y Melilla	5.92	2.10	5.96	7.23	7.63	2.64	-1.60	3.16	4.46	4.80
Spain	6.19	6.28	6.34	6.28	6.33	3.16	3.74	3.84	3.91	3.94

Source: *Spanish Regional Account 1995 Base*, National Statistics Institute (published estimates in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 y (and) 2004 corresponding to year 1999).

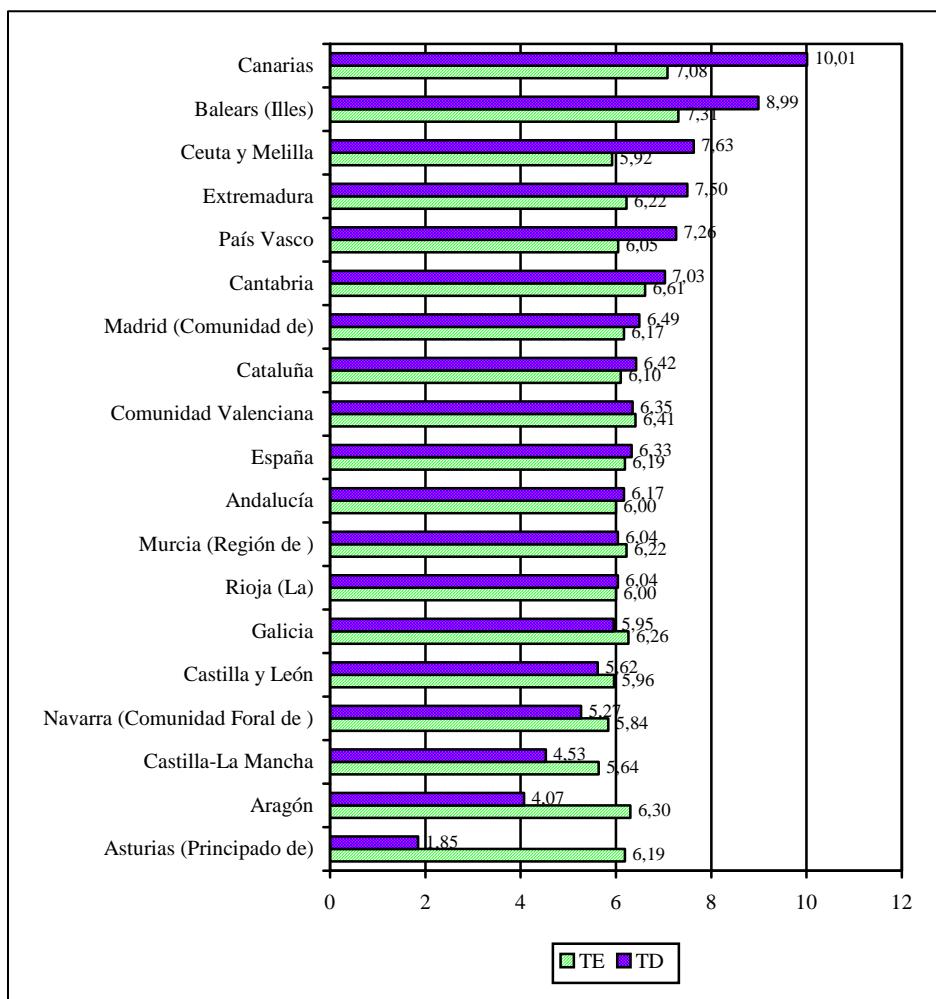
The purpose of this study is to analyze the regional GVA data currently available in the INE database in order to evaluate the data for accuracy and reliability and analyze the data across regions. The aim is to analyze these revisions in the estimates for the regional account process within the Spanish economy. These estimates are made by INE via a set of statistical procedures to determine the accuracy and reliability of the regional statistics.

The variability of growth rates leads us to think that for some users statistical data is not relevant for the purpose of judging the economic situation in the autonomous community; therefore it is just accepted or rejected depending on their opinion; and so the publication of new data is an excuse to insist on the assessment of the accuracy and reliability of statistics but does not give grounds for further thinking.

Graph 1 allows the accuracy to be judged graphically- that is to say, the existing variability between the valuation of growth for the first estimate and the definitive one. The most outstanding difference corresponds to the *Principado de Asturias*, where the first estimate is 6.19% and the definitive one 1.85%. I have to point out the case of *Canarias*, where the growth rates range between 7.8% for the first estimate and 10.01% for the definitive one.

The situation is different for constant prices (see Graph 2). Although in *Asturias* the growth rates corresponding to the different estimates decrease when the review process is applied, this decrease is not as great as it is in current prices (it ranges from the 2.84% in the first estimate to 0.18% in the definitive one). I have to emphasize the case of *Extremadura*, where from the first estimate to the definitive one, the growth rate increases by 2.37 percentage basic points.

Graph 1. Accuracy: comparison between the first estimate and the definitive one (current prices)



If the real growth rates in GVA is examined for different branches of activity for the *Principado de Asturias* or *Canarias* (see Table 5 and Table 6), I have to pinpoint the variability in terms of level and sign, which outline the need for strong methodology to judge the accuracy and reliability of the different estimates to ensure data quality. The knowledge of errors will help to use statistics correctly because the user can see the decreases of data quality as the disaggregation level increases.

Graph 2. Accuracy: comparison between the first estimate and the definitive one (constant prices)

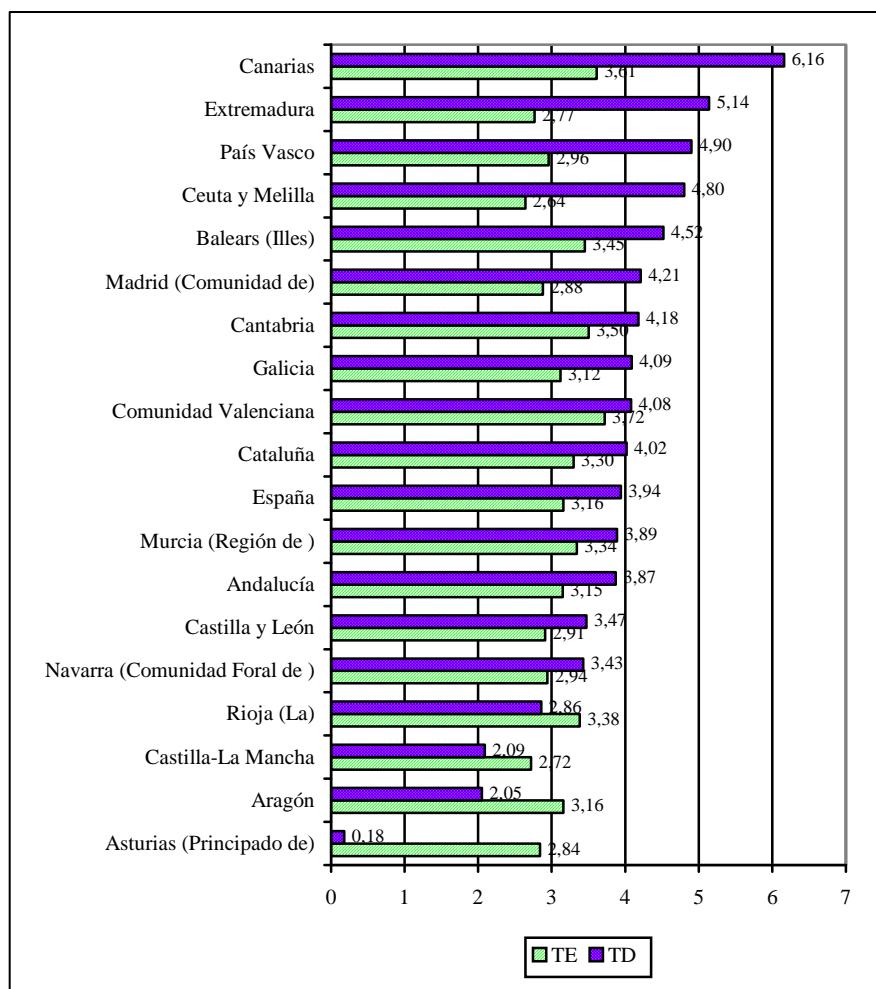


Table 5. GVA growth rate at basic prices in the Principado de Asturias according to branch of activity (constant prices, 1995 Base)

A6	Branch of activity	1999				
		TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD
1.1	Agriculture, livestock and fishing	4.16	4.05	-3.29	-2.79	-2.85
2.1	Energy	-3.79	-4.37	-2.34	-1.79	-2.19
2.2	Industry	0.84	4.39	4.06	5.16	2.18
2.3	Construction	4.69	-0.43	0.15	0.09	0.02
3.1	Market services	4.43	1.37	0.61	-0.47	-0.45
3.2	Non-market services	1.03	2.69	0.79	-0.17	-0.18
	SIFMI	-1.54	-6.35	-6.99	-7.78	-8.32
	TOTAL	2.84	1.77	1.11	0.75	0.18

Source: *Spanish Regional Account 1995 Base*, National Statistics Institute (published estimates in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 corresponding to year 1999).

**Table 6. GVA growth rate at basic prices in Canarias according to branch of activity
(constant prices, 1995 Base)**

A6	Branch of activity	1999				
		TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD
1.1	Agriculture, livestock and fishing	3.12	-11.18	-12.76	-12.71	-12.75
2.1	Energy	2.25	2.21	2.85	2.45	-7.18
2.2	Industry	1.67	2.52	2.73	4.20	6.09
2.3	Construction	10.82	18.51	18.20	18.44	18.35
3.1	Market services	3.69	4.11	3.61	6.35	6.22
3.2	Non-market services	0.75	3.54	4.51	4.42	4.43
	SIFMI	2.83	-3.50	-3.69	-2.54	-2.85
	TOTAL	3.61	4.88	4.70	6.47	6.16

Source: *Spanish Regional Account 1995 Base*, National Statistics Institute (published estimates in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 corresponding to year 1999).

4. The MRS Approach

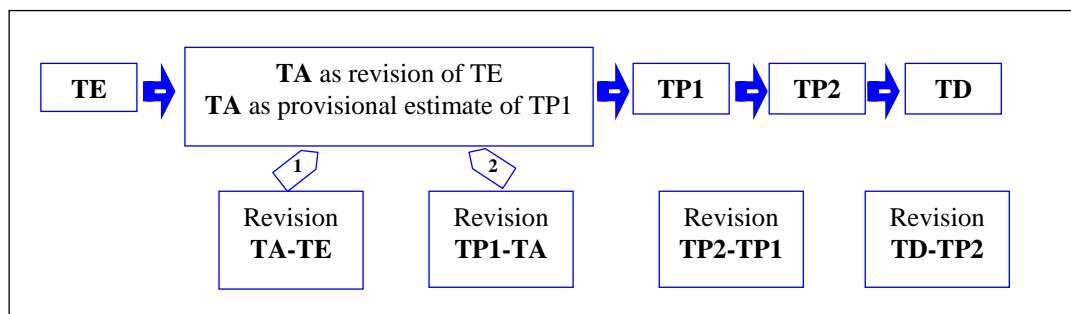
Using the methodology introduced by Mankiw, Runkle and Shapiro [1984, pp. 17-19] and Mankiw and Shapiro [1986, p. 6], I evaluate whether the review processes are *new information* (news) or *noise*.

Under the *noise* assumption the revisions (R_i) are biased, and so these revisions are correlated to the initial estimates. The initial estimate contains information that might be used to predict future revisions.

Unlike this hypothesis it is the *new information* belief according to which the revisions are not biased, and so the revisions and initial estimates are not correlated.

Now (see Figure 1), a provisional estimate⁴ can be considered as an observation of the reviewed series with a measurement error or *noise* that is not correlated with the final estimate but with the initial one. Later estimates will reduce or discard this error.

Figure 1. Relation between each GVA estimate and revisions



⁴ The provisional estimates are subject to later revisions.

On the other hand a provisional estimate can be considered an efficient prediction in the reviewed series. In this case consecutive estimates reflect *new information* to be incorporated after the initial estimate is published; that is to say, later estimates will decrease or cut out prediction error as new data or new information is gathered. Under this assumption, revisions reflect prediction errors instead of measurement errors. These two explanations for the provisional estimate have different implications in terms of revision quality.

Whether the revisions reflect measurement errors or errors generated by efficient predictions depends on the statistical procedures used for INE. Estimate revisions have intermediate estimates considered simultaneously as a review in the previous estimates and as a provisional one for later revisions- for instance, an intermediate estimate for GVA, TP1 is also good as a review for the previous estimates (TE and TA) and as a provisional estimate in later revisions (TP2 and TD).

The underlying idea is that if initial estimates constitute efficient predictions, then they should have a smaller variance (standard deviation) than the final estimate. So if the data review process includes only *new information* or *news*, then a systematic relation between the initial estimates and later revisions will not exist. In fact, a negative relation between the revisions and the initial estimates should be expected. On the other hand, when there is only *noise* in the information, the result is an excess of variance in the initial estimates with regard to the later ones, this variance will be declining as the series review process improves.

An important consideration is the concern about the methods and criteria used to analyze the accuracy and reliability for the provisional estimates. Much economic and statistical literature on the National Account System revisions tends to establish the accuracy and reliability on the provisional estimates on the statistical measurement base, which are descriptive but not satisfactory for provisional data property analysis. To give a suitable evaluation of the innovations introduced by the review process, the analysis must be integrated by using econometrics.

Theoretically, the methodology can be presented as follows. In terms of accuracy, the definitive annual estimate (current and constant prices) on the growth rates of total GVA at basic prices, GVA_i^D will be equal to the growth rate on the initial estimates, GVA_i^I plus a term of review, R_i where $i=1, 2, \dots, 17$.

$$(2) \quad GVA_i^D = GVA_i^I + R_i$$

$$(3) \quad R_i = GVA_i^D - GVA_i^I$$

If the revisions are biased (*noise*), then, the later estimates on GVA will show new information received, after initial estimates have been published. There will be a strong relation between revisions, R_i and initial estimates. GVA_i^I .

If, on the other hand, the revisions are unbiased (*new information*), then there will be an irrelevant correlation between revisions and initial estimates (GVA_i^I). As a result, the initial estimates do not contain information to predict future revisions.

In terms of reliability the methodology is the same, but I compare each review with the later one.

Mankiw and Shapiro [1986, p 10-15] use the efficient prediction test developed by Mincer and Zarnowitz [1969]. This test is based on the rational expectations theory in order to confirm the hypothesis of *new information* versus *noise*. Later, Holden and Peel [1990], together with Barrionuevo [1993], among other authors (York and Atkinson, [1997]) will use the same procedure to judge the bias and statistical efficiency.

They estimate two classic models of linear regression where the revisions are lineal functions of the initial GVA estimates (equivalent to the efficiency tests β used by Holden and Peel [1990] and Barrionuevo [1993]) (,) and the revisions are also lineal functions for the revisions of the previous period (similar to the test ρ used also by Holden and Peel [1990] and Barrionuevo [1993])

$$(4) \quad R_i = \alpha + \beta GVA_i^I + u_i$$

$$(5) \quad R_{i,t} = \alpha + \rho R_{i,t-1} + u_i$$

where I = TE, TA, TP1 and TP2, α is the intercept, which indicates the bias in the revisions β is the regression coefficient and measures the initial estimate impact on the review behaviour indicating the existing relation between initial estimates and the revisions. Finally, u_i , is the random adjustment.

Holden and Peel [1990, pp. 120-127] and Barrionuevo [1993, pp. 29-30] suggest the following procedure to prove the absence of bias and the efficiency I will apply to the statistical revisions for the estimates in the Spanish Regional account. The absence of bias test is carried out by executing a least-squares regression on the review regarding a constant term. Assuming there is total bias absence, the estimate should not be statistically different from zero, and as a result, the null hypothesis is accepted. If the null hypothesis is rejected, revision errors would be able to be reduced, adjusting initial

figures throughout the intercept. In addition, unbiasedness is also important because it is a necessary condition for efficiency.

The efficiency test needs to verify the following condition:

- In a regression by ordinary least-squares (OLS) in the revisions regarding the initial estimate, the associated coefficient is zero (test β).

$$(6) \quad R_i = \alpha + \beta GVA_i^I + u_i$$

- In a regression by OLS in the revisions regarding the previous period, the coefficient is zero (test ρ). This matter involves the fact that an error in the estimate per review should not be strongly related to estimate error at a previous period.

$$(7) \quad R_{i,t} = \alpha + \rho R_{i,t-1} + u_i$$

When a null hypothesis is accepted, this is, β and ρ are together not significant, the initial estimate is an efficient prediction for the final one. Otherwise, if β or ρ are significantly different from zero, this shows us an inaccurate prediction. This implies a reduction in the variance (standard deviation) and as a result the temporary estimate may improve [York y Atkinson, 1997, pp. 242-245].

Tests β and ρ can provide an indication about the nature of the inaccuracy in the initial estimate and the adjustments needed to improve it. Barrionuevo [1993, p. 30] states that if β is zero but ρ is not, the variance in the revisions can reduce adjustment of the estimate through ρ . In this case, past estimate errors are currently repeated. On the other hand, if β is different from zero but ρ is not, the review variances can improve adjustment of the estimate through β ; in this way revisions contain information not included in the initial estimate. Both coefficients are unlike zero- the lack of accuracy is due to the way new information is included in the mentioned values.

The conventional method tells us that the prediction is efficient if the estimate coefficients are $\alpha = 0$ and $\beta = 1$. Furthermore, this method is used to assess the lack of bias. It is proved [Barrionuevo, 1993, p. 29] that under rational expectation hypothesis, this is a necessary, albeit insufficient condition of efficiency, because a set of predictions could satisfy this restriction without this minimum variance. Hence, this is all about confirming the method $\alpha = 0$ and $\beta = 0$; Holden and Peel [1990, pp. 120-127] prove this condition is necessary and sufficient.

If revisions are unbiased (*new information*) the predictions are efficient (rational). This must be consistent with the idea that the prediction errors present in the estimates

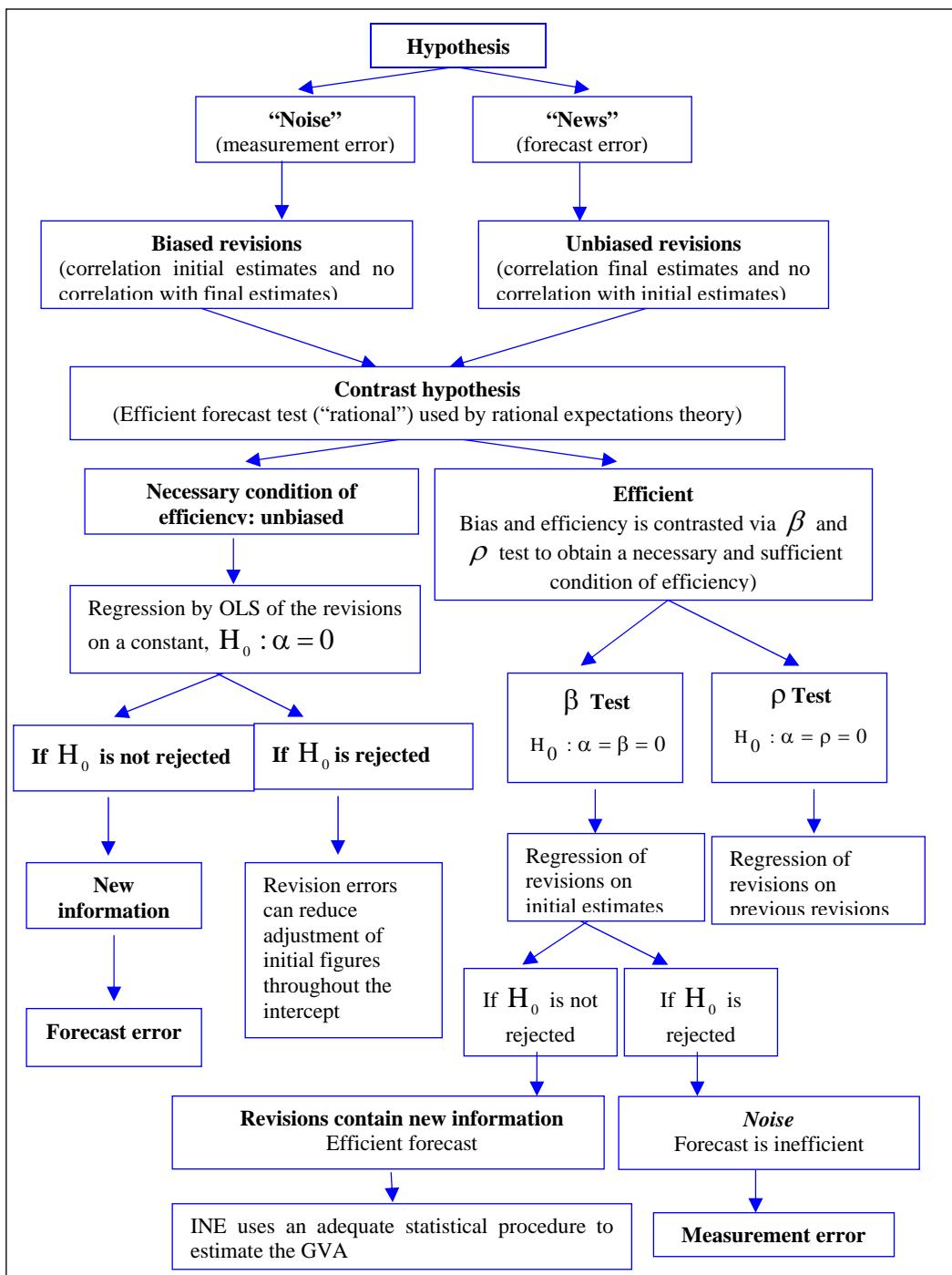
are corrected by adding new information. The revisions (R_i) and the initial estimates (GVA_i^I) are not going to be correlated (this condition is true because $\beta = 0$), and so the following assumption should be confirmed:

$$(8) \quad H_0 : \alpha = \beta = 0$$

If I reject the null hypothesis, this means that R_i and GVA_i^I are correlated, therefore the revisions will be biased. There will be a measurement error that could be corrected in later revisions.

Considering these assumptions I evaluate the statistical properties in the provisional estimates and the revisions in terms of lack of bias and efficiency. By way of a summary, Figure 2 shows how the process has been developed in this article.

Figure 2. MRS method



5. Main Results

This paragraph shows the first assessment of the evolution in the growth rates for the accounting revisions in GVA aggregates at basic prices (constant, K , and current prices, C) for each Autonomous Community in Spain during 1999.

The samples correspond to the 17 Autonomous Communities in Spain, Ceuta and Melilla, have not been included in this study due to their residual character in the official

statistics. Although it is too small a sample to provide firm conclusions and, therefore, validity of the test is reduced, the results can be used to illustrate later studies with greater sample sizes.

5.1. Descriptive analysis for the revisions

Firstly, a set of statistical instruments to assess the significance in differences between the first estimates and the definitive ones is used.

Table 7 shows that the characteristic deviation in the real and nominal growth in GVA in the 17 Spanish regions changes from 0.416 in the initial estimate up to 1.828 in the final estimate and also from 0.305 up to 1.363. If initial estimates are efficient predictions for the last ones, this would be the case in which the last estimates must have a lower standard deviation with regard to the definitive one, and so if the review process adds new information, a systematic relation between initial estimates and the definitive ones will not exist, therefore, there will be no measurement errors.

In this case the growth rates variability is consistent with the assumption of efficient predictions that the initial estimates are efficient predictions for the last ones, because the deviation increases from the first estimate to the definitive one (in terms of accuracy). Nevertheless, a decrease occurs between the second provisional estimate and the definitive one (in terms of reliability) which can suggest the existence of a measurement error (*noise*) in the corresponding review. This point will be analyzed later by suitably efficiency prediction tests.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations of GVA growth rates

	Mean		Standard deviation		Relative typical deviation	
	C	K	C	K	C	K
TE	6.256	3.161	0.416	0.305	0.066	0.096
TA	5.872	3.264	1.421	1.321	0.241	0.404
TP1	5.976	3.451	1.475	1.366	0.246	0.395
TP2	6.196	3.684	1.899	1.496	0.306	0.406
TD	6.211	3.714	1.828	1.363	0.294	0.366

The characteristic deviations (see Table 8) in the revisions range from 1.058 for the change from the first provisional estimate to the second provisional one (TP1-TP2) to 1.592 for the first estimate and the definitive one (TE-TD) at current prices and from under 0.676 up to a high 1.382 for the same review at constant prices. As a result, the typical deviations in the revisions are relatively higher than the proper specific deviations for the growth rates. Therefore, an estimate growth rate is associated with a wider interval of confidence. For instance, if the specific deviation in the review between the advanced estimate and the definitive one for current prices is 1.592

percentage points, if the growth rate in TA is 1.421 then I can only state that the final estimate (TD) will be within (-0.171;3.013). The best gap for 95% will be wider and therefore less accurate than the previous one and would range between (- 1.763 and 4.605).

Table 8. Standard Deviation of Revisions in GVA growth rates

	TA		TP1		TP2		TD	
	C	K	C	K	C	K	C	K
TE	1.311	1.284	1.345	1.331	1.621	1.382	1.592	1.275
TA			0.499	0.446	1.271	0.822	1.379	0.941
TP1					1.058	0.676	1.171	0.819
TP2							0.533	0.556

Table 9 shows the coefficients of correlation between the revisions and the data available before and after the provisional estimates; this information enables the revisions informative content to be embodied. Bearing in mind table 8, the correlation between revisions and provisional estimates must show an assumption of error measurement while the existing correlation between the revisions and the reviewed series should demonstrate a prediction error in the hypothesis. The four increased revisions are displayed in lines while the consecutive estimates are in columns. The level of significance for the correlation coefficients under the no correlation hypothesis⁵ is displayed in brackets. The blue triangle represents the correlations between the revisions and the reviewed estimates; under the null hypothesis with respect to the fact that revisions are errors generated by efficient predictions, this correlation must be zero. The orange triangle shows the existing correlations between the revisions and the provisional estimates. Under the error measurement assumption these correlations should be zero.

Table 9. Correlations between GVA growth rates and revisions

	TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD	TE	TA	TP1	TP2	TD
	C					K				
TA-TE	0.114 (0.663)	0.957** (0.000)	0.880** (0.000)	0.573* (0.016)	0.517* (0.034)	0.003 (0.990)	0.973** (0.000)	0.919** (0.000)	0.751** (0.001)	0.683** (0.002)
TP1-TA	0.162 (0.536)	-0.065 (0.803)	0.276 (0.284)	0.344 (0.177)	0.376 (0.137)	0.000 (0.999)	-0.065 (0.803)	0.263 (0.307)	0.255 (0.323)	0.276 (0.283)
TP2-TP1	0.696** (0.002)	0.022 (0.933)	0.100 (0.703)	0.635** (0.006)	0.651** (0.005)	0.565* (0.018)	-0.059 (0.822)	-0.047 (0.858)	0.410 (0.103)	0.398 (0.114)
TD-TP2	-0.389 (0.123)	-0.365 (0.150)	-0.330 (0.196)	-0.272 (0.291)	0.009 (0.972)	-0.290 (0.258)	-0.402 (0.110)	-0.391 (0.121)	-0.451 (0.098)	-0.047 (0.859)
TD-TE	0.477 (0.053)	0.660** (0.004)	0.768** (0.000)	0.911** (0.000)	0.980** (0.000)	0.177 (0.498)	0.750** (0.001)	0.822** (0.000)	0.881** (0.000)	0.975** (0.000)

⁵ This null hypothesis is contrasted: $H_0 : \rho = 0$.

*Significant at the 5-percent level.

**Significant at the 1-percent level.

The evidence shown in the Table 9 is more consistent with the revision details such as efficient predictions than with the details of the revisions as measurement errors. Correlations in the blue triangle are small and except for the correlation between the TP2-TP1 revisions with TE, none is statistically relevant with regard to current or constant prices. On the other hand, the correlations in the orange triangle are higher and in most cases statistically significant by 1%. For instance, the correlations for revisions TP1-TA and TD-TP2 are an exception to the measurement error rejected because estimates are correlated with the mentioned revisions. This fact agrees with the value of specific deviations for the revisions presented in this table, these deviations are smaller (0.499 for the review TP1-TA and 0.533 for TD-TP2). I should point out that the situation⁶ changes in the constant prices correlation case in the orange triangle. It turns out to be more difficult to explain the revisions in GVA for the real growth rates than the revisions for the nominal growth rates, because they are not statistically significant, except for the TA-TE review. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no correlation is accepted.

The identification of specific deviations and crossed correlations between the revisions and the growth rate estimates supports the assumption that revisions are errors generated by efficient predictions rather than measurement errors.

5.2. Efficiency of the revisions

An important feature for the initial estimate is that the associate revisions are not affected by systematic bias. The notion of absence of bias normally requires equivalent predictions for the initial released estimate. On the other hand efficiency in an initial estimate requires an associated review that is not correlated with the available information when the initial estimate is made and also requires no incidence in new errors due to old ones⁷.

Table 10 shows the results in several regressions in which the revisions are a linear function for the constant and provisional estimate. Under the null hypothesis in which the revisions are errors generated by efficient predictions, all the coefficients of these regressions, including the constant one, must be zero. The results are generally

⁶ This situation is reflected in Mankiw and Shapiro's work [1986, p. 22].

⁷ See Holden and Peel [1990] and Barriouevo [1996]. These regressions provide a useful distinction between the difference inefficient forms mentioned in section 3.

consistent with the assumption that revisions reflect *new information*. That is why I confirm the assumption of error prediction although in the specific deviations and correlations study doubts could appear, although the rationality test will clear them up. By unpredictable revisions I may confirm that provisional estimates are efficient predictions for the definitive estimate. Nevertheless, the main concern is that the revision accuracy as well as the initial estimate (TE) predicts the definitive one (TD) more than the provisional estimates predict the definitive one, therefore the question is: *is the initial estimate efficient forecasting the definitive estimate?*

The entire regression (equation 5, regression TD-TE) at current prices which analyzes the accuracy has an associated critical level of 0.052 and this is not enough to accept the assumption of prediction error. Therefore, the review is predictable, it is not accurate and there is evidence of bias, measurement error is evident. If the constant is positively significant, this means that on average the GVA revisions are positive from TE to TD⁸, and shows if revisions are rising or falling. In this case it is possible to state that the entire review (TD-TE) is underestimated (-11.450) since the remaining coefficients are not significantly different from zero. This result is consistent with the one obtained in Table 9 (shaded in grey), where the correlations between review TD-TE and the growth values support the measurement error assumption, the total review is slightly predictable and therefore not efficient.

This is proved by the low R^2 adjusted which indicates the regression success to predict the values in the endogenous variable- in this case, the revisions. This is defined as part of the variance in the dependent variable explained by independent variables. Therefore, the R^2 adjusted are negative and the statistic F are very small except for the total review which is associated with the greatest R^2 adjusted from all 17% which evidence a certain degree of predictability. This leads us to the conclusion that the remaining regressions, current and constant prices, are only important to a limited extent in the variance for the revisions, and so the revisions are unpredictable. Therefore, the most recent GVA estimate carried out by INE is an efficient prediction in the final estimate. In this case, the revisions have been done, all the available information is taken into consideration and error is due to the merging of *new information* (prediction error).

At constant prices there is no evidence of weak prediction in regressions, and so the results are consistent with the assumption that the revisions reflect *new information*.

⁸When revision is defined as a later (more recent) estimate minus an earlier estimate, a positive (negative) value of intercept (and significantly different from zero), pinpoint an overestimation of GVA growth rates.

Therefore, the adjusted R^2 are negative and the statistics F are small. In current and constant prices the review from the second provisional estimate (TP2) to the definitive one (TD) is unpredictable. This unpredictability in these revisions is strong evidence that the second provisional estimate is an efficient prediction for the definitive one.

Table 10. Regressions of revisions on growth rates in GVA (current and constant prices)

Equation	Incremental revisions				Total revisions				Incremental revisions				Total revisions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
Regressions	TA-TE	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2	TD-TE	TD-TA	TD-TP1	TD-TP2	TA-TE	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2	TD-TE	TD-TA	TD-TP1	TD-TP2
C																
Intercept	-2.627	0.239	-0.208	0.489	-11.450	1.182	0.519	0.489	0.058	0.259	0.313	0.598	-1.780	1.173	0.892	0.598
Std-error	5.061	0.546	1.132	0.451	5.433	1.494	1.257	0.451	3.448	0.305	0.472	0.346	3.371	0.613	0.545	0.346
t-Statistic	-0.519	0.437	-0.184	1.084	-2.107	0.790	0.412	1.084	0.016	0.848	0.662	1.727	-0.528	1.912	1.635	1.727
Prob.	0.611	0.668	0.856	0.295	0.052	0.441	0.685	0.295	0.986	0.409	0.517	0.104	0.605	0.075	0.122	0.104
TE	0.358				1.823				0.014				0.737			
TA		-0.022				-0.143				-0.022				-0.221		
TP1			0.071				-0.047				-0.023				-0.182	
TP2				-0.076				-0.076				-0.154				-0.154
Std-error	0.807	0.090	0.184	0.069	0.866	0.247	0.204	0.069	1.085	0.087	0.127	0.087	1.061	0.174	0.147	0.087
t-Statistic	0.444	-0.253	0.388	-1.095	2.103	-0.578	-0.232	-1.095	0.013	-0.253	-0.181	-1.764	0.605	-1.267	-1.236	-1.764
Prob.	0.663	0.803	0.702	0.290	0.052	0.571	0.819	0.290	0.989	0.802	0.858	0.098	0.497	0.224	0.235	0.098
R-squared	0.012	0.004	0.009	0.074	0.227	0.021	0.003	0.074	0.000	0.004	0.002	0.171	0.031	0.096	0.092	0.171
Adjusted R-squared	-0.052	-0.062	-0.056	0.012	0.176	-0.043	-0.062	0.012	-0.066	-0.062	-0.064	0.116	-0.033	0.036	0.031	0.116
F-statistic	0.197	0.064	0.151	1.199	4.425	0.335	0.053	1.199	0.000	0.064	0.032	3.110	0.483	1.606	1.528	3.110
Prob (F-statistic)	0.663	0.803	0.702	0.290	0.052	0.571	0.819	0.290	0.989	0.802	0.858	0.097	0.497	0.224	0.235	0.097
Wald Test (Prob F-statistic)	0.471	0.689	0.662	0.557	0.142	0.530	0.710	0.557	0.950	0.268	0.403	0.237	0.201	0.091	0.222	0.237

Table 11 analyzes in detail the results on 8 regressions in consecutive revisions on the first estimate. The results for the total review of current prices agree with the ones obtained by Faust *et al.* [2000, p. 7] where all the revisions are predictable. The revisions are biased (*noise*) and are correlated with the initial estimates. This can be proved in Table 9 which shows the correlations of the initial estimate of the growth rate of GVA with revisions of the aforementioned growth rates. The critical level associated with the correlation coefficient for the review from the initial estimate to the definitive one (TD-TE) with the initial estimate (TE) is too low to accept the non-correlation assumption. In this case, if I observe the independent term, there is a tendency to lower the estimates for GVA (the associate coefficients for the revisions (3) and (5) at 5% and (6) and (7) at 10% are significantly different from zero and are also negative). The R^2 adjusted to these regressions are raised if I compare them with the rest, and so they show a certain degree of prediction. Furthermore, in these regressions $\beta = 0$ is rejected and so the predictions for the Spanish regional economy are inefficient, because all the information available is not included, when the prediction is made. This does not happen at constant prices where the total review is unpredictable; the result is endorsed by R^2 with a negative adjustment and a low F statistical value.

The predominant positive sign of the regression coefficient indicates the average degree of reversion, with initial estimates which are reviewed upwards, except for regressions (4) and (8) in which the positive initial estimates are revised downwards.

Either at current or constant prices, regression (11) is predictable; the null hypothesis in which all coefficients are zero is rejected. This involves a bias in the review and is not efficient. The measurement error assumption is accepted. This result is consistent with the one in Table 9 in which the no correlation null hypothesis is rejected for current and constant prices.

Table 11. The β test

Equation	Incremental revisions				Total revisions				Incremental revisions				Total revisions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
Regressions	TA-TE	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2	TD-TE	TD-TA	TD-TP1	TD-TP2	TA-TE	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2	TD-TE	TD-TA	TD-TP1	TD-TP2
C								K								
Intercept	-2.627	-1.107	-10.843	3.127	-11.450	-8.823	-7.715	3.127	0.058	0.185	-3.727	1.703	-1.780	-1.838	-2.023	1.703
Std-error	5.061	1.915	3.950	1.909	5.433	4.802	4.057	1.809	3.448	1.198	1.498	1.430	3.371	2.457	2.119	1.430
t-Statistic	-0.519	-0.575	-3.674	1,637	-2.107	-1.837	-1.901	1.637	0.016	0.154	-2.486	1.190	-0.528	-0.748	-0.954	1.190
Prob.	0.611	0.573	0.002	0.122	0.052	0.086	0.076	0.122	0.986	0.879	0.025	0.252	0.605	0.465	0.354	0.252
TE	0.358	0.193	1.768	-0.497	1.823	1.464	1.270	-0.497	0.014	0.000	1.252	-0.529	0.737	-0.723	0.723	-0.529
Std-error	0.867	0.305	0.470	0.304	0.866	0.766	0.647	0.304	1.085	0.377	0.471	0.450	1.061	0.773	0.167	0.450
t-Statistic	0.444	0.665	3.757	-1.633	2.103	1.911	1.963	-1.633	0.013	0.001	2.653	-1.175	0.605	0.935	1.083	-1.175
Prob.	0.663	0.515	0.001	0.123	0.052	0.075	0.068	0.123	0.989	0.998	0.018	0.258	0.497	0.364	0.295	0.258
R-squared	0.012	0.026	0.484	0.150	0.227	0.195	0.204	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.319	0.084	0.031	0.055	0.072	0.084
Adjusted R-squared	-0.052	-0.038	0.450	0.094	0.176	0.142	0.151	0.094	-0.066	-0.066	0.274	0.023	-0.033	-0.007	0.010	0.023
F-statistic	0.197	0.402	14.117	2.666	4.425	3.655	3.855	2.666	0.000	0.000	7.042	1.380	0.483	0.875	1.174	1.380
Prob (F-statistic)	0.663	0.535	0.001	0.123	0.052	0.075	0.068	0.123	0.989	0.998	0.018	0.258	0.497	0.364	0.295	0.258
Wald Test (Prob F-statistic)	0.471	0.218	0.004	0.291	0.142	0.121	0.131	0.291	0.950	0.277	0.022	0.505	0.201	0.128	0.261	0.505

Table 12 shows the review regressions for the GVA estimates of previous revisions. Again the Wald test that indicates that the null hypothesis in which all coefficients (included the intercept) are zero is accepted. This implies the efficiency existence in the way new information is included in the estimates- in this case the past estimate errors are not repeated in later estimates, therefore the variance on the revisions cannot be improved adjusting the coefficient by ρ .

Table 12. The ρ test

Equation	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regressions	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2	TP1-TA	TP2-TP1	TD-TP2
C						K
Intercept	0.086	0.168	0.018	0.189	0.224	0.054
Std-error	0.129	0.263	0.136	0.111	0.184	0.146
t-Statistic	0.665	0.639	0.136	1.691	1.214	0.368
Prob.	0.515	0.532	0.893	0.111	0.243	0.717
TA-TE	-0.046			-0.023		
TP1-TA		0.492			0.047	
TP2-TP1			-0.014			-0.104
Std-error	0.097	0.531	0.130	0.089	0.391	0.210
t-Statistic	-0.476	0.925	0.112	-0.261	0.122	-0.497
Prob.	0.640	0.369	0.911	0.797	0.904	0.626
R-squared	0.014	0.054	0.000	0.004	0.001	0.016
Adjusted R-squared	-0.050	-0.009	-0.065	-0.061	-0.065	-0.049
F-statistic	0.226	0.856	0.012	0.068	0.015	0.247
Prob (F-statistic)	0.640	0.369	0.911	0.797	0.904	0.626
Wald Test (Prob F-statistic)	0.636	0.471	0.987	0.268	0.407	0.864

6. Conclusions

The uncertainty regarding economic information increases with the probability of error in the underlying data and their processing and interpretation. Accurate evaluation is essential to ensure proper accountability for the large sums of public money now being devoted to regional policy. In particular, evaluating regional policy requires a much better understanding of how regions operate and interact. Rather than being ‘nice to know’, information on such factors as regional trade and prices are essential for a detailed understanding of the workings of the regional system.

An important characteristic on the data published by the INE is the recurrent review process they undergo before being considered definitive. This fact generates consecutive publications with different quantitative evaluations if the same subject is under study (*data vintage*).

The principal purpose of the revisions and their analysis is to identify any bias in the initial estimates and to leave a certain margin in the figures released. All the review

policy is subject to the principle that at each stage the finished estimates are released with the best data available at any given time. It is necessary to emphasize an important aspect of this approach: too many useless revisions can be a nuisance for users. To give the system more flexibility, the accuracy and reliability in regional statistics is increasing and making the methodology as well as the results obtained more transparent.

In an interdependent society like ours today, statistics are neither a luxury nor a control instrument to serve the government; it is or should be another input in the production process, public provision of highways, schools or justice, and the information provided is essential to allocate resources properly. Therefore, when a Spanish region is labelled according to its Gross National Product (GNP), in terms of the composition of activity or employment, in its expenditure framework or in the balance sheet of public administrations, etc., a message is being sent and it is the responsibility of all statistics professionals to describe the reality of the situation as accurately as they can.

Therefore, users must be aware of the need for measurement on the published data and compel data producer organizations to release an indicator of accuracy and reliability with each estimate. Ultimately, the knowledge of errors should lead to a commitment from these organizations to stop using any estimate whose degree of uncertainty exceeds a certain quota. It is about obtaining quality measurements of specific statistics carried out with a specific design; therefore, it is not possible to obtain useful results without knowledge of the data collection process.

This analysis can provide INE with a basis to assess the accuracy or reliability in the revisions of the main aggregates for GVA, since economic literature does not provide alternatives that attempt to characterize the estimate errors in GVA in regional accounting with clear information about quality and reliability of revisions and their implications.

The main conclusions for the statistical analysis prepared for the estimates of Spanish Regional Accounts are set out below.

The specific deviation results on growth rates in GVA at total basic current and constant prices decreases as new estimates are released. Therefore, this shows that estimate quality increases over time. The correlations at current prices between the growth rates and the revisions support the results obtained after analysing specific deviations, so the predicted error assumption is more acceptable than the measurement error. Nevertheless, at constant prices the review characterization is not

so clear, although correlation does not exist between revisions and reviewed series. In most cases, correlation either between the revisions and the provisional estimates does not exist, which shows a measurement error.

In terms of accuracy, the entire review of constant prices is unpredictable; this is consistent with the assumption that revisions reflect new information, except for regression of the entire review of current prices (TD-TE over TE), which is slightly predictable. Therefore, the prediction of this review makes it clear that the first estimate is not a solid efficient prediction for the definitive estimate.

In terms of reliability, the increased revisions of current and constant prices are unpredictable except for the regression in the TP2-TP1 review of the first estimate TE in test β . The prediction of this review is clear evidence that the first estimate is not an efficient prediction from the corresponding review.

The final conclusion is that, although there are exceptions, the estimates in the main regional aggregates for GVA, both at current and constant prices, can be explained as a data review process with new information more than as measurement errors, and so the National Statistics Institute follows a suitable statistical procedure in order to obtain the GVA total estimates.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that procedures to increase the standardization and representative nature of information have to be defined from a better knowledge of the sources used in different countries. Besides, this will lead to a high degree of comparability of estimates. In this sense, the completion of quality reports for regional accounts by the Member States has been a particularly important task. This has made understanding the results easier and has helped in decision-making in the socio-economic environment.

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