

Handout for January 2020 Newsletter Mapping Fiscal Policy in GeoFRED®

Purpose.

1. Create a nation-level geographical map of general government net lending/borrowing.
2. Edit the map by modifying its colors.
3. Interpret the economic information displayed in the map.

Pedagogical Rationale. This assignment requires that you first search for data online, select a particular series, and display it in the form of a geographical map. Next, you will edit the format of the map. Lastly, you will interpret the economic information displayed in the map. These tasks will develop your proficiency in searching for, transforming, and interpreting data.

Grading. Your grade will be determined by (a) how precisely you complete the search and transformation data tasks and (b) how accurately you interpret the data.

Steps to Search for and Transform the Data.

1. Access <https://geofred.stlouisfed.org> and click on “Build New Map.”
2. Click on “Tools” and under “CHOOSE DATA > Region Type:” select “General government net lending/borrowing by Nation”
3. Click on “Data:” and select “Frequency: Annual” and “Units: Percent of GDP.” Select “Date > 2017.”
4. Click on “CHOOSE COLORS” and select from “Multi Hue,” the right-most color scheme from the second row (tagged “ylorrd”).
5. Click on “EDIT LEGEND” select “Interval Method > User defined” and “Define maximum interval values.”
 - -6
 - -3
 - -1
 - 0
 - 2.307

Discussion Prompts. Answer the following questions:

1. Name two countries that reported a government budget surplus (as a fraction of GDP) in 2017.
2. Name two countries that reported a government budget deficit larger than 6% of their GDP in 2017.
3. Notice that the countries colored in grey have no data available. Considering all the countries with available data, which are more common: government budget surpluses or balances? Can you name any country with a balanced government budget?