Weapons systems are potentially destructive and if really used they destroy productive capital instead of increasing it. Indeed, that was precisely the reason, why they were previously recorded as immediately consumed under ESA 1995. Furthermore, it is highly questionable whether the fiscal framework should actively encourage military spending and a potential arms race. The ethical questions apart, spending on weapons systems can hardly be considered as a particularly growth enhancing expenditure category. Theoretically, it is not clear how the marginal contribution of military investment to national security should be measured. Indeed, military investment was explicitly excluded from many studies on the long term growth effects of public investment. Aschauer’s original contribution did not find military spending to be important for economic productivity (Aschauer 1989).

A third change occurred in the delimitation of the government and the private sector. The classification has become stricter in most cases in the sense that some companies/non-profit organisations closely related to the public sector had to be reclassified from the private to the government sector. This statistical enlargement of the government sector may partly remove one shortcoming of the investment definition in the national accounts: Investment grants paid by the public sector to private companies are not classified as investment expenditure. In the case that a formerly private company which receives investment grants increasing its investment expenditures is reclassified to be part of the public sector, the additional investment spending will now be counted as government investment. However, if a public investment grant is spent on investment by a recipient company then from an economic point of view it should generally not make a difference whether the company is classified as public or private. Therefore, for purposes of the Golden Rule, investment grants paid from the public to the private sector should be classified as public investment.

Of course, there may be other expenditure categories that may be equally or even more beneficial. A natural candidate is public spending on education or health care which in the existing system of national accounts is classified as current expenditure. It has been argued that privileging traditional, mostly physical investment in infrastructure and equipment and neglecting those other forms of investment in an economic sense may distort the optimal allocation of resources with potentially unclear implications for efficiency, growth and welfare (Turrini 2004: 29-30). However, in the presence of strong evidence for considerably positive growth effects of traditional public investment it would seem overcautious to forego the advantages of the Golden Rule. Indeed, a stepwise approach is much more convincing. The economic case for including other types of spending into the Golden Rule should be checked. If inclusion seems rational but at the current stage difficult to implement for statistical or other reasons, then the