SAP Group Reporting - How to leverage a full S/4 Finance implementation for budgeting and legal and management consolidation purposes?

In this article we will guide you through a powerful solution that addresses the objectives of an efficient consolidation and group close processes, SAP Group Reporting.

As experts in delivering solutions for Analytics, Planning, Consolidation and Reporting we can assess and help you defining effective and efficient consolidation and budgeting tools adapted to your business. We have an extensive experience on different consolidation tools (e.g. SAP Financial Consolidation, SAP Business Planning and Consolidation), so we can guide you through the best solution for your circumstance.

A powerful, recent solution that address the objectives of an efficient consolidation process is SAP S/4 Finance for Group Reporting (SAP Group Reporting). This tool is built on the S/4HANA platform, can be use on premises and cloud and allows direct consolidation of S/4 HANA ERP data. Businesses that do not work in S/4HANA can use the SAP Group Reporting Data Collection module to load the data. Furthermore, it supports management reporting with its embedded analytics capabilities, with the possibility to integrate with the Disclosure Management tool or SAP Analytics Cloud.

About the author



André Almeida

André is a Manager at Stampa Partners and Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment MCSI. He has over 10 years of international experience advising and auditing clients in Africa, Europe and Middle East. As a consultant, André developed expertise in finance transformation, process optimization and regulatory and internal reporting.



Marcel Frey

Marcel Frey has been working in IT and Business consulting for more than 15 years. He holds a Master in Business Economics from the University of Lausanne. Mr. Frey has been working with the SAP BPC solution since its early days (as part of the Outlooksoft company), then in an expert level job in the SAP EMEA organization for several years before joining Stampa Partners, where he currently leads the SAP BPC practice.

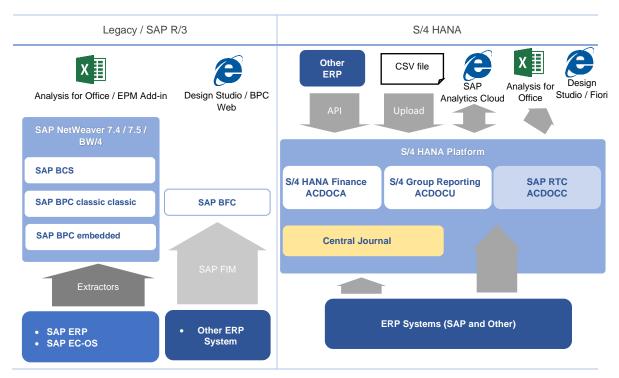
Among some of the relevant features SAP Group Reporting has that make it a powerful tool, we can highlight the following:

Feature		Strength
Use both on premises and cloud	→	Real time integration and access to local data
Use data from SAP and non-SAP systems Single environment for entity and Group Closing	→→→	Replace the use of spreadsheets and Data Warehouse Central Validation Acceleration of consolidation process
Instant access to data and integrated Accounting and Consolidation Reporting	→→	Integration with SAP Analytics Cloud enabling consolidation of plan data Embedded analytics (Dashboard and Management Reporting capabilities)

SAP Group Reporting is SAP's strategic solution for consolidation and management reporting in SAP S/4 HANA. It is a recommended tool for consolidation in general, especially for businesses that do not rely on 100% on premise solutions. If your business has any S/4 component, whether at Group, entity level or both, you should consider this SAP Group Reporting.

SAP Group Reporting - Architecture

In this chapter we want to present the most relevant differences between the SAP R/3 vs. S/4 HANA landscape. The main practical difference resides on the simplification and flexibility of S/4 architecture.



In a legacy (R/3) world, an ERP booking is either extracted directly to the consolidation tool or exported to a Data Warehouse (for example SAP BW) before being imported to the consolidation tool. These exports will result in a delay between the posting and the availability of the figures in the consolidation system.

Using S/4 Hana Platform, the ERP system (HANA Finance) is in the same platform as the consolidation tool (Group Reporting). The user is therefore only a click away from importing the ERP data into the consolidation system. Exceptions can be customised for example for subsidiaries of entities which do not share the same ERP system, by using other files for integration (e.g. connection via API, upload CSV files, manual data with dedicated SAP Analytics Cloud or a Central Finance connection).

The changes on the architecture increase automation and bring some other very relevant improvements:

- Reduces potential differences on financials between systems
- ⇒ Increase transparency, auditability and data quality
- ⇒ Accelerate the consolidation process

Cost Reduction

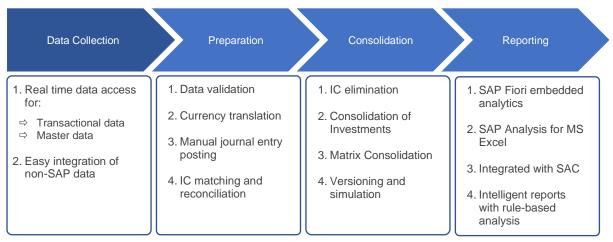
As mentioned, sitting the ERP system and the consolidation tool in the same S/4 Hana platform, meaning that any booking in either system would be register at the same source of data. This avoids differences on the financials between systems that result from last minute postings directly on the consolidation tool.

Therefore, Group Reporting's architecture eases and speeds the group closing process and decrease compliance and assurance efforts representing relevant cost reductions. At the same time the tool keeps all the relevant information from the sources (i.e. accounting details), which enhances its reporting capabilities.

SAP Group Reporting - Data Collection Process

SAP Group Reporting aggregates some of the best features of different consolidation tools in a single solution, including simplified integration of data (i.e. out-of-the box integration of S/4 Hana Finance postings into Group Reporting) and continuous closing process on entity and group level. These features increase the speed of processing and enhances its reporting capabilities.

SAP Group Reporting cover the 4 required activities for group close:



*Source: SAP

Data Collection

Consolidation process starts with the data collection activity.

When entities upload the financial data for their consolidation process, an overview of the process and the progress can be seen in SAP Group Reporting's Data Monitor:

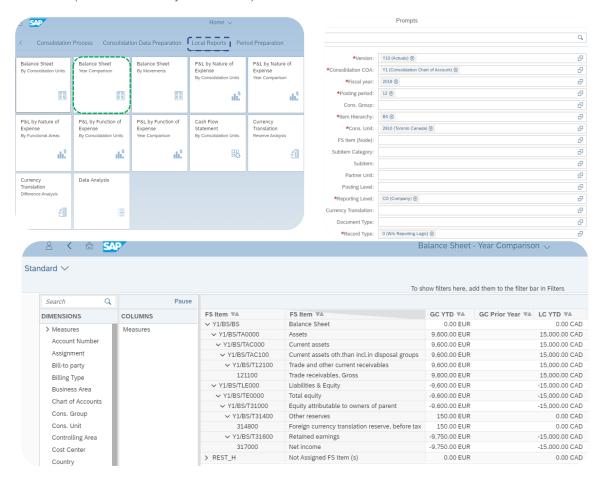


This Data Monitor is customisable and indicates:

- The hierarchy of entities in each Group;
- Which are entities being used in the data consolidation process (i.e. non highlighted entities);
- Status of each data collection step per entity (and overall Status);
- Sequence of the required steps / activities.

In the example above, Milano and Germany are entities with completed data collection while China and Toronto are in the first sub activities.

Before collecting new data, the user can start by verifying the financial statements available in the system from its local entities (in this case for entity 2910 Toronto):



The finance user can then perform any missing postings on the financial statements, reperform the validations on the data monitoring menu as well as reimport data:



The process can be replicated to each of these sub steps (e.g. currency conversion of the new financial statements).

The actual activities included in the data collection process (like data import, mapping of imported data, validations of data) will be detailed in a later post in this series.

Data Acquisition

As a relevant topic on any consolidation process, we will now discuss the important tool features that support data acquisition using SAP Group Reporting.

As you might be aware the biggest challenges on any consolidation process is to obtain good data and good details, i.e. data of high quality. A set of different issues can cause problems, either from an incorrect posting in the local accounts, the use of incorrect exchange rates (or different exchange rates between different entities) or the use of wrong codes.

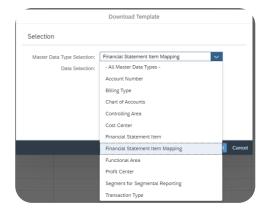
SAP Group Reporting is a powerful tool with strong features that address some of these common issues. A lot would worth being highlighted but we will focus on how we get good data in the system.

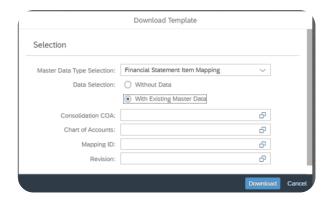
We would like to highlight three relevant features on data collection that make this solution interesting:

- 1. Postings done in S/4 Hana are integrated into Group Reporting based on a timestamp mechanism, business users can integrate new postings with one-click in the provided Fiori App.
- 2. In Group Reporting there is a mapping feature, which allows the finance user to map local data to its group chart of account. This means that when a local posting is booking, it can be integrated in the consolidation tool on the correct group account.

The user can do this in a four-step basic process.

- First, he selects Import Master Data for Consolidation Fields.
- Second, he will download the template Financial Statement Item Mapping as showed below
- Third, he will perform the changes directly on the downloaded Excel file.
- Fourth, he will reupload the file on the Import Master Data menu → the changes take place:





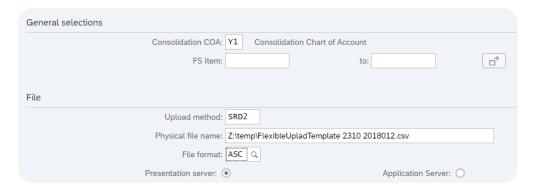
Import Financial Statement Item Mappings



This process demonstrates the flexibility of the tool and how easy is the mapping maintenance process provided by SAP Group Reporting. The tool does not require the web interface that often prevents the use of very large files.

3. Data for non-S/4 entities or additional data can be collected either with flat files or by using a cloud platform.

Out-of-the box flat file import allows users to select the fields and dimensions needed as well as the file format. Users could for example also include information about additional dimensions like profit centres, cost centres, and others.

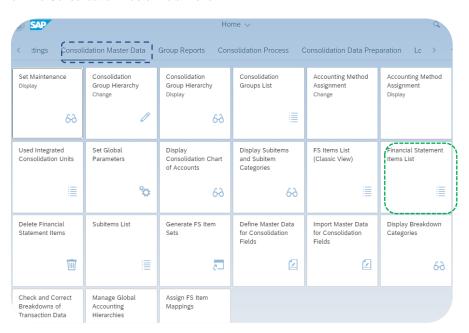


Data Validations

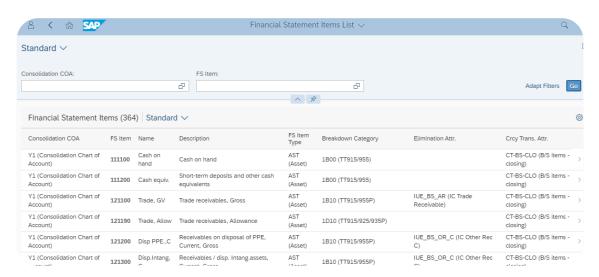
To obtain data of high quality is not only important to have strong and reliable sources but also to have consistent means to validate it. SAP Group Reporting supports the process of data validation and explores different mapping possibilities in many ways.

We want to highlight two of its features in this post:

The user can assess the consolidation accounts, rules (i.e. elimination attributes and conversion methods –
e.g. B/S items closing) and breakdown categories in place. To do it he can access the Financial Statement
List from the Consolidation Master Data menu:



The breakdown category indicates which details are required (such as partner unit, subitem/flows, ...) or optional for each financial statement item (e.g. trade receivables):



E.g.: Trade receivables uses breakdown category 1B10.

These details are relevant for example to allow only intercompany postings on a specific financial statement item. There is also the possibility to provide a default value if no value is specified for an additional detail.

The valid subitems/flows are defined with a selection (a selection is simply a list of individual items or ranges of items).

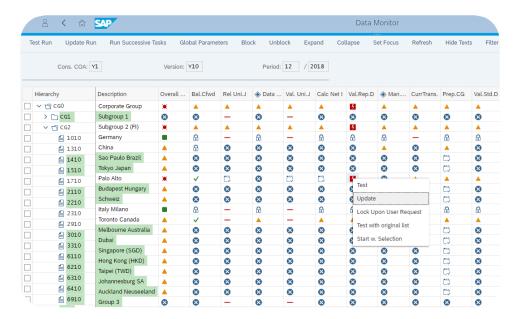


This type of customised information is relevant for the consolidation process as it will define the rules by which specific data can be imported/inputted or not. If invalid, the tool will highlight the errors.

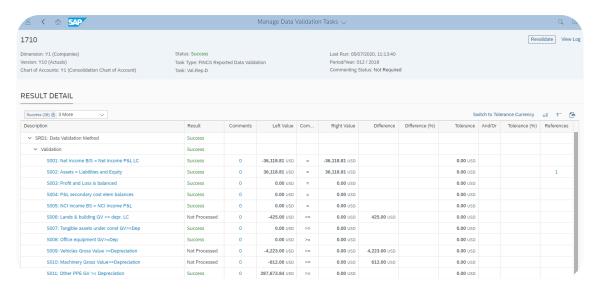
It is also important to mention that this feature allows the user to specify for each account the information that can/needs to be provided.

2. The user can verify a series of checks and validations either on the local data as well as for each consolidation step.

In the example below, the user is performing a Reported Data Validation on Palo Alto. On the Data monitor by clicking "update" on the selected step and entity:



The Validation presents all the results of each validation as well as any percentual and absolute differences. The system has standard validations, but any additional can be configured:



SAP Group Reporting - Preparation and Consolidation Processes

As a tool that covers different phases of the consolidation process, we will now discuss the important features of the intermediate activities, Preparation and Consolidation:

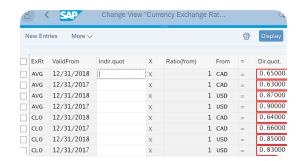


Preparation

The preparation of the consolidation is the step where finance user assesses the basic information required for consolidation. The tool presents in its tab form a button with the information required to be prepared as "Period Preparation":

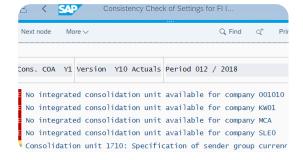
1. Maintain Exchange Rates:





2. Mapping verification to verify if all accounts were properly mapped from the local to the group CoA:

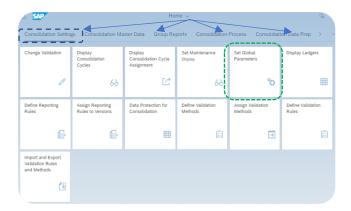


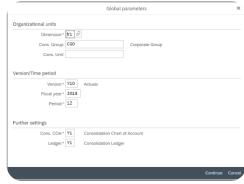


Consolidation

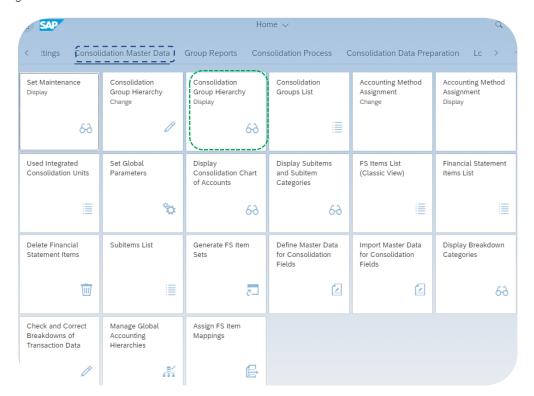
The consolidation process is the core activity of the SAP Group Reporting tool. Therefore, it comprehends an extensive set of menus and possibilities.

To start with the definition of the consolidation period, in the Consolidation Settings, the user can select to set global parameters to define the period of consolidation:



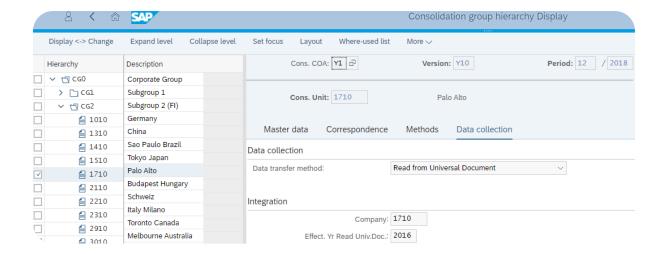


The finance user can also assess the Consolidation Group Hierarchy and the data collection method in place by accessing the Consolidation Master Data menu:



In this menu, it can be defined the consolidation structure by selecting the Consolidation Group Hierarchy Display.

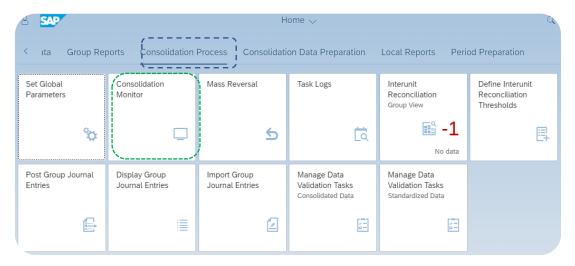
In this menu the user can select the data collection methods for each business entity (e.g. to read the data directly from S/4 or to do it via a load file):



When selecting entity 1710 - Palo Alto, the Data transfer method is set to "Read from Universal Document". This means that Palo Alto's data will be read directly from S/4 system.

Probably one of the most relevant menus for the finance user is the Consolidation Process. On the menu displayed below it can be seen the relevant activities that can be done:

- 1. Intercompany (IC) reconciliations;
- 2. Post Group Journal Entries (for additional corrections).
- 3. Import Group Journal Entries (in case the user has prepared a list of bookings to be performed)



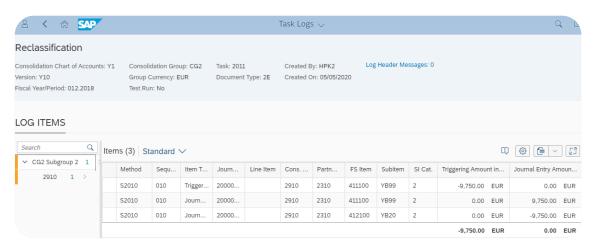
Also, as it happens for the Data Collection activity, the finance user can access a consolidation monitor:



In the consolidation monitor, the user can see:

- · which are the existent consolidation groups;
- sequential consolidation steps (elimination of IC Gross Profit, elimination of IC Other Income / Expense, elimination of IC dividends, etc);
- status of each consolidation step / activity.

From the menu, the user can then drilldown in each activity to see the postings done by that activity. For example, for the elimination of IC Gross Profit, the tool shows 9'750 Eur, which is the result of a sales between two intercompanies:



This information can be viewed as journals in Group Reporting and can be displayed in reports.

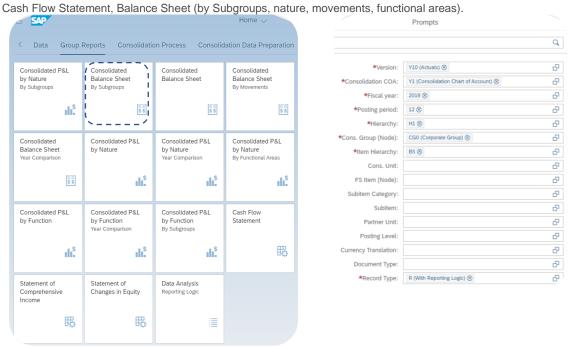
SAP Group Reporting - Reporting Process

The last required activity covered by SAP Group Reporting for Group Close is the Reporting:



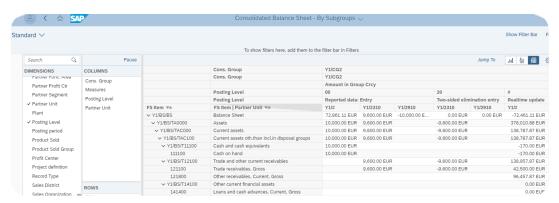
Reporting

SAP Group Reporting has some standard reports available in the tool. When selecting the Group Reports menu, the user can access consolidated reports on P&L, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Comprehensive Income,

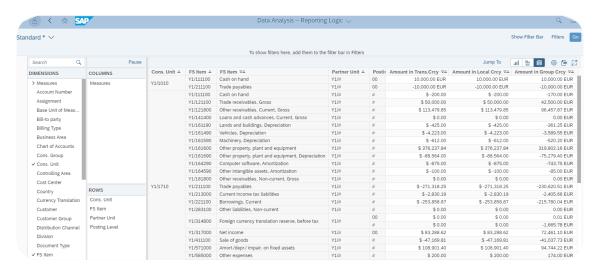


Those reports are customisable to expand for the different dimensions a user intends to view. In the report creation tool, the user can drag and drop them from the left column and add them as a column or a row.

To the default report, the Posting level and Partner Unit dimensions were added to the columns of the report:



Another report available is the Data Analysis report, where the user can pick the information.



These reports can be exported to Microsoft Excel.

SAP Group Reporting also leverages other SAP reporting tools like SAP Analytics Cloud or Analysis for Office to build custom reports on top of the group reporting data.

.....

We at Stampa & Partners have an extensive track record working with CFOs and supporting organisations in Europe successfully digitalise finance functions, leverage analytics and ensure compliance with new accounting standards. Therefore, we can advise your business with the best solutions to fulfil your goals.

Your Contacts:

Stampa & Partners AG • Marcel Frey • Grafenauweg 6 • 6304 Zug • Switzerland • T +41 41 727 19 11

Stampa Group Deutschland GmbH • Florian Schmidt • Theresienstrasse 1 • 80333 München • Germany • T +41 41 727 19 11 imisys GmbH • H. P. Kammergruber • Carl-Jordan-Str. 9 • 83059 Kolbermoor • Germany • T +49 8031 90965 0

