



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

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Country Note
Germany

UNITED NATIONS

International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2 (IMTS, Rev.2)

Comments from Germany to specific points of IMTS, Rev.2

See Chapter I: Coverage and time of recording

Heading 1. Goods to be included in the detailed international merchandise trade statistics (points 19-41)

20. *Unissued banknotes and securities, and coins not in circulation.*

¹² These items are regarded as commodities rather than as financial items, and should be included in imports or exports of products of the printing industry, and coin (see para. 123 below for recommendation on valuation). Issued banknotes and securities and coins in circulation are regarded as financial items and should be excluded (see para. 43 below).

Comment from Germany: A recommendation should be given how to treat legal means of payments which are traded above par as collector's items. In Germany commercial transactions with these coins and banknotes are included.

23. *Food and other humanitarian aid.* Articles of food, clothing, medicaments and other goods entering or leaving a country under aid programmes or as emergency assistance, whether provided by Governments (see also para. 22 above), international organizations or non-governmental organizations, should be recorded as imports (exports) of the countries involved (see para. 124 below for recommendation on valuation).

Comment from Germany: Help in cases of catastrophes is exempted from a declaration in Germany/the EU as in such cases the bureaucracy should be minimized.

25. *Goods acquired by all categories of travellers, including non-resident workers, to a significant scale as defined by national law* are to be included (see also para. 48 below).

Comment from Germany: In Germany in the framework of EU-Intra-trade these goods are not included in foreign trade statistics as the PSI are only companies liable to taxes on sales or purchases. In trade with countries that are not members of the EU a threshold value of 5,000 € is used.

33. *Migrants' effects.* The recording and inclusion of the physical movements of migrants' effects is important for countries where migration is taking place on a significant scale and migrants take their personal property with them. Some countries include only the dutiable portion of these goods, while others apply value or quantity limits as criteria for their inclusion. Where migrants' effects are economically important, all goods in this category should be included (see para. 124 below for recommendation on valuation).

Comment from Germany: In Germany these goods are not included in foreign trade statistics because such transactions are not relevant.

[39. *Bunkers, stores, ballast and dunnage* that are: ¹⁶]

¹⁶ A vessel is considered foreign if it is operated by a non-resident enterprise.

Comment from Germany: In Germany/the EU a vessel /airplane is attributed to the country where its owner is registered (register of shipping/ aviation) as it seems to be an approximation to the concept of the operator. This approximation was chosen as it is difficult to get information on the operator.

See Chapter I: Coverage and time of recording

Heading 3. Goods recommended to be excluded from the detailed international merchandise trade statistics but recorded separately so that the detailed data may be adjusted to derive totals of international merchandise trade for national accounts and balance of payments purposes (points 55-63)

58. *Fish catch, minerals from the seabed and salvage sold from national vessels in foreign ports or from national vessels on the high seas to foreign vessels* are to be excluded from export statistics but recorded separately (for treatment in import statistics, see para. 38 above). ¹⁶

Comment from Germany: In Germany/the EU dispatches are included when sea products are landed in another country's ports or acquired by vessels registered in another country from a vessel registered in Germany and arrivals are included when sea products are landed in a German port or acquired by vessels registered in Germany from a vessel registered in another country since 2005. But they can be declared in a simplified way (use of the fishery statistics).

59. *Bunkers, stores, ballast and dunnage* that are:

(a) Acquired by national vessels or aircraft outside the economic territory of a country are to be excluded but recorded separately (for treatment in exports, see para. 39 (b) above);

(b) Supplied by national vessels or aircraft to foreign vessels or aircraft outside the economic territory of a country or landed in foreign ports from national vessels or aircraft are to be excluded but recorded separately (for treatment in imports, see para. 39 (a) above). ¹⁶

Comment from Germany: From a methodological point of view these transactions should be included as they are the correspondent goods transactions to the cases described in point 39. But for practical reasons it is not possible to get this information and we have to renounce to get coherent results here.

62. *Goods entering or leaving the economic territory of a country illegally.* This includes, for example, smuggling, trade in stolen vehicles and shipments of narcotic substances, the use or possession of which is illegal in one or both of the compiling countries.

Comment from Germany: In Germany these goods are only included if the smuggle etc. is discovered. Estimations can not be done as the data base is not reliable.

63. *Goods lost or destroyed after ownership has been acquired by the importer.* These are excluded from the detailed import statistics of the intended importing country but recorded for adjustment purposes. They are included in the detailed export statistics of the exporting country (see para. 52 above).

Comment from Germany: In Germany these goods are always excluded on the import side without any adjustments.

See Chapter II: Trade system

Heading A. General ... (points 64-73)

67. *The special trade system* is in use when the statistical territory comprises only a particular part of the economic territory. *The special trade system (strict definition)* is in use when the statistical territory comprises only the free circulation area, that is, the part within which goods "may be disposed of without customs restriction" (see annex B, para. 2 below). Consequently, in such a case, imports include all goods entering the free circulation area of a compiling country, which means cleared through customs for home use (see annex B, para. 4 below), and exports include all goods leaving the free circulation area of a compiling country.²³ However, under the strict definition, goods imported for inward processing (see annex B, para. 6 below) and goods which enter or leave an industrial free zone (see annex B, para. 13 below) would not be recorded since they would not have been cleared through customs for home use. The compensating products after inward processing (see annex B, para. 6 below) also would not be included in exports. Examples of these are when crude petroleum is brought into a country for refining under the inward processing procedure or when non-ferrous base metals are imported and smelted under the same procedure, and the resulting products are exported. From an economic standpoint, however, this kind of industrial activity does not differ from similar activities elsewhere in the economy. For this reason, the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics adopted by the League of Nations in 1928 recommended the inclusion of such activity in the record of special trade statistics.²⁴ When this recommendation is applied, a "relaxed" definition of the special trade system is in use; i.e., *the special trade system (relaxed definition)* is in use when (a) goods that enter a country for or leave it after inward processing and (b) goods that enter or leave an industrial free

zone are also recorded and included in international merchandise trade statistics.

Comment from Germany: In Germany/the EU the “relaxed definition” is used. Comprised are goods in free circulation and processing activities.

See Chapter II: Trade system

Heading B. General trade system... (points 74-79)

76. Reimports are to be included in the country imports. They are also recommended to be recorded separately for analytical purposes, which may require the use of supplementary sources of information in order to determine the origin of reimports, i.e., to determine that the goods in question are indeed reimports rather than the import of goods that have acquired foreign origin through processing.

79. Re-exports are to be included in the country exports. They are also recommended to be recorded separately for analytical purposes, which may require the use of supplementary sources of information in order to determine the origin of re-exports, i.e., to determine that the goods in question are indeed re-exports rather than the export of goods that have acquired domestic origin through processing.

Comment from Germany: In Germany re-exports can be indirectly identified with the help of an additional national data element. Reimports are not identifiable as such an additional data element is not given. It is thus not possible to report them separately.

See Chapter IV: Valuation

Heading A. Statistical value of imports and exports (points 111-130)

117. Although customs administrations generally require the FOB or CIF value to be placed on the customs forms by traders, there are occasions when the trade statistician needs to examine supporting documents either to establish the transaction value itself or to identify insurance and freight costs, or for other reasons. Such supporting documents may include the contract of sale, which would normally contain the "terms of delivery" of goods. Types of terms of delivery used in international commerce, including FOB and CIF, are described in annex D below.

Comment from Germany: In Germany only the declarations for customs purposes are analysed. Supporting documents are not collected in general.

General points for discussion

Consequences of the globalisation and its impact on the foreign trade statistics

- Reimports and re-exports
- Processing
- Intra-firm trade
- Quasi-transit

The globalisation implicates an increasing international exchange of goods. Goods move faster and more often from one country to another, either unchanged (reimports and re-exports) or the production process is split into sub-processes in different places of production in several countries (processing). By the increasing merging tendencies the intra-firm trade also grows. Another phenomenon is the tendency to trade bundled goods where goods and services are offered as a complete package.

The comparability over time of the results is hampered by the international division of labour. As i.e. the growing part of processing in foreign trade is blowing up the foreign trade result. If a good is processed abroad the foreign trade statistics first records the export of the unprocessed good. The processed good is newly recorded after the processing with the value of the unprocessed good plus the value of the process (gross value principle). This complicates a comparison of the results.

In intra-firm trade the goods transactions are not always carried out following considerations concerning free-market requirements but the conditions for the goods movements are often provided by the mother company. Thus those transactions are often not carried out by using market prices but the prices are dictated. It is therefore difficult for the foreign trade statistics to determine the market price of the traded goods. The problem bundled goods present for the foreign trade statistics is that it is increasingly complicated to separate the goods transactions and its value from the service part of the bundle as there is often one undifferentiated total account for both parts of the transaction.

Quasi-transit is a problem that appears principally in customs unions. Goods that are destined for a member of the customs union may be released into free circulation in another country of the customs union. The goods should be correctly allocated to the country of final destination but are included in the statistics of the country where they are released into free circulation even if they only pass through this country to reach the country of final destination. This (recorded) goods transaction is for the releasing country a quasi-transit.