

# Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade

IMF, OECD, UNCTAD and WTO



5<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON BIG DATA  
FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS – MAY 2024

# Roadmap

- Why is it important to measure digital trade?
- Genesis of the Handbook
- Core of the Handbook
  - Definitions, a conceptual framework and a reporting template
    - today
  - Practical advices to compile digital trade
    - tomorrow
- Known progress
- Key take-aways

## Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade

SECOND EDITION



# Why is it important to measure digital trade?

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# Digital trade is important for policymaking

- The G20 has called **for a review of statistical framework to measure the digital economy and digital trade**, and this measurement dimension has been prevalent in G20 presidencies agenda since at least 2015.
- **International trade :**
  - Support trade policy discussions and negotiate new digital economy agreements,
  - Analyse the digital trade implications of changes in regulatory frameworks
- **Competition policy:** Getting information to assess the role and behaviour of large digital firms
- **Tax policy:** adapt tax framework to new business models, prevent profit shifting, assess whether one should collect VAT on online sales of services or not.
- Preventing a growing **digital divide**

# Digital trade : a statistical paradox

- The possibility to sell online has lowered, and has the potential to lower further, barriers to export, in particular for households and SMEs. It has **eased access to new markets**, whilst also having a significant disruptive impact on many industries.
- Digitalisation remains largely **invisible** in official statistics of trade.
- Complicating matters was the **absence of a single definitive view** on what has been actually meant by digital trade, whose interpretation typically differs depending on the application or the user.

# Measurement challenges

- **Two main challenges:**
  - Digitalisation increases the **involvement of small firms and households** in international trade.
  - The involvement of **digital intermediation platforms (DIPs)** adding a third actor to certain transactions.
- Overcoming these challenges will help to **develop digital trade statistics**, but also to **improve the measurement of international trade** in general.

# Genesis of the Handbook

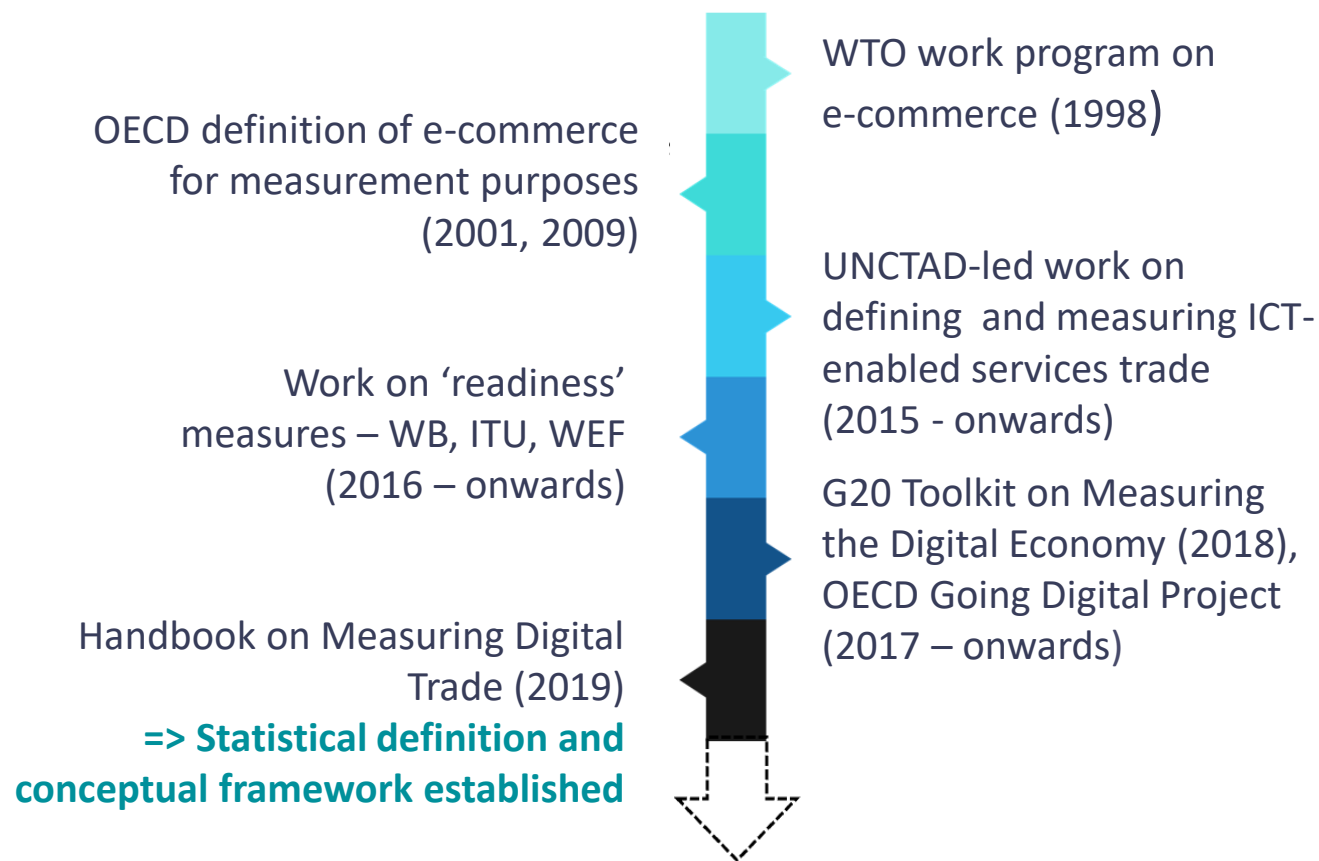


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# Past initiatives



## Handbook on Measuring Digital trade second edition (2023)



# A brief history of the Handbook

2017

The Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics, co-chaired by the OECD and the WTO, created an Expert Group, with a large participation of countries

2019

Publication of the first version of the Handbook

2023

The Handbook was revised by a team comprising experts from the IMF, WTO, UNCTAD and OECD, after extensive consultations with countries

2024

The Handbook was endorsed by the Statistical Commission in February

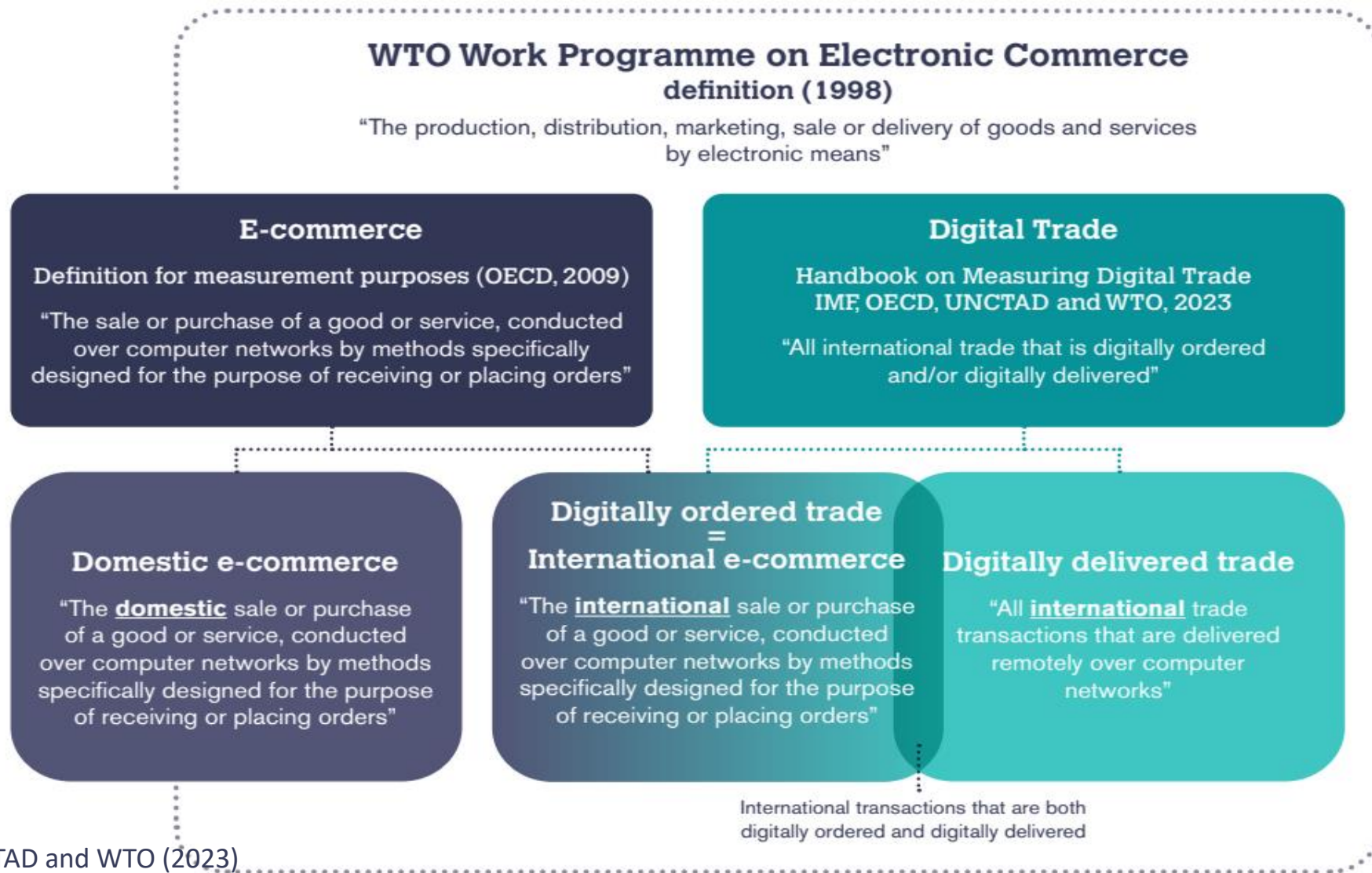
# Conceptual framework and reporting template

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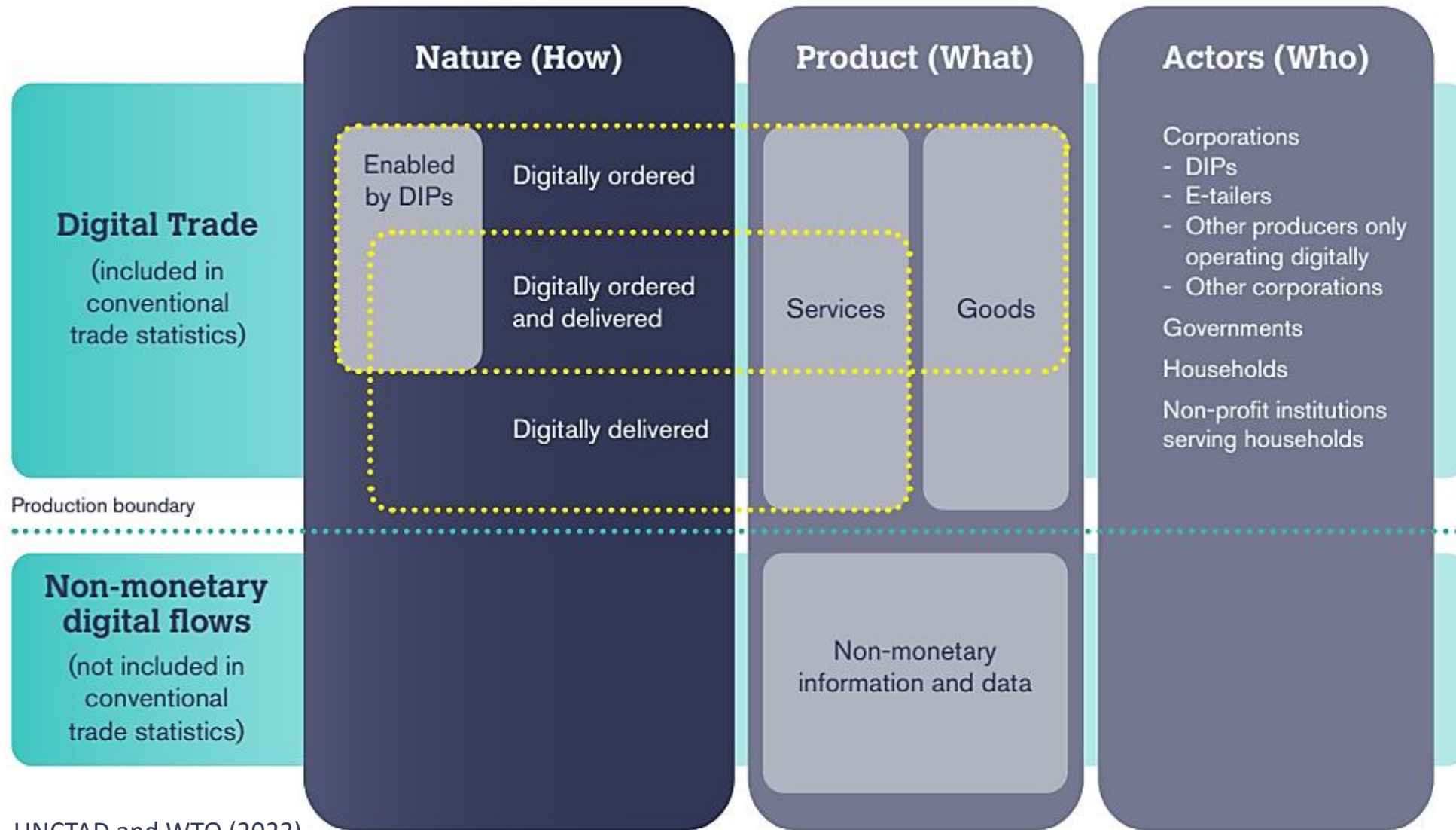


# Key concepts



Source: IMF, OECD, UNCTAD and WTO (2023)

# The conceptual framework



Source: IMF, OECD, UNCTAD and WTO (2023)

# Digital intermediation platforms (DIPs)

*“Online interfaces that facilitate, for a fee, the direct interaction between **multiple buyers and multiple sellers**, without the platform taking economic ownership of the goods or rendering the services that are being sold (intermediated)”*



# A reporting template

Item			Total exports	Total imports
1	<b>Total digital trade</b>	2+3 minus 4		
2	<b>Digitally ordered trade</b>	2.1+2.2		
2.1	Goods			
2.1.a	<i>of which: via DIPs</i>			
2.2	Services			
2.2.a	<i>of which: via DIPs</i>			
3	<b>Digitally delivered trade</b>			
3.a	<i>of which: via DIPs</i>			
4	<b>Digitally ordered and digitally delivered trade</b>			
4.a	<i>of which: digital intermediation services</i>			
	<b>Addendum items</b>			
A.1	Digital trade in services	2.2+3 minus 4		

Source: IMF, OECD, UNCTAD and WTO (2023)

Known progress



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# Known progress as of February 2024

All	Digitally ordered		Digitally delivered	
	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
No country	Env. 17 countries	Spain China and Turkiye El Salvador	Costa Rica and India Canada, United States and United Kingdom	El Salvador and Namibia Germany and Ireland



# Turning the Handbook into action

- The IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, and WTO are working to develop in-person, online, and blended training to support Handbook implementation
- In-person workshops of 4-5 days
- First workshop took place in November 2023 in Abu Dhabi for Arab countries
- Workshop provision is demand-led. To express interest contact [emeasurement@unctad.org](mailto:emeasurement@unctad.org); [barbara.dandrea@wto.org](mailto:barbara.dandrea@wto.org) and [pquill@imf.org](mailto:pquill@imf.org)



**Regional Workshop on Measuring Digital Trade  
20-23 November 2023  
Abu Dhabi, UAE**

# Key take-aways

- The Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade sets out **key definitions, a conceptual framework, and reporting template for digital trade statistics.**
- It was **endorsed by countries** through global consultation **and the Statistical Commission.**
- Countries have started to use the conceptual framework, although much more needs to be done in particular in measuring digitally delivered services.

# Thank you for your attention

