



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics**  
**First meeting**  
**New York, 3-6 December 2007**

*Country Presentation*  
**Italy**

*Item 14: Data quality*

International Merchandise Trade Statistics: concepts and definitions,  
Rev.2 (IMTS Rev.2)

## **Chapter VII: Reporting and Dissemination or more specific Quality Control issues ?**

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Expert Group on Merchandise Trade Statistics  
First meeting  
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## **Chapter 7: Reporting and dissemination**

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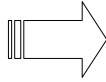
Chapter 7 of the existing IMTS deals with the following issues:

- ❑ Dissemination
- ❑ Reference period
- ❑ Data reporting
- ❑ Confidentiality
- ❑ Data comparability
- ❑ Retained imports
- ❑ Index numbers
- ❑ Seasonally adjusted data
- ❑ Comparability between FTS, SN and BoP

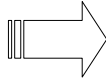
## Reporting and dissemination are aspects of quality: could it be useful to make it more evident?

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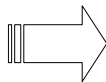
From the European system's point of view:



quality is never explicitly mentioned;



almost all the paragraphs of the chapter relate to **quality issues in FTS**;



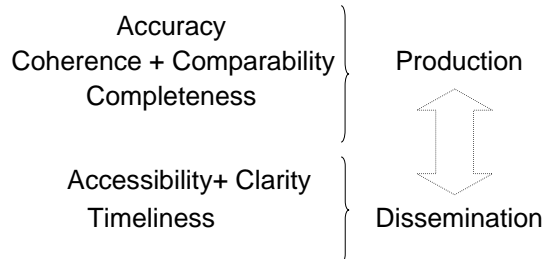
paragraphs concern aspects of production other than dissemination.

**Is it possible to rethink the chapter, making a more explicit reference to some sort of Quality framework?**

## The European concept of Quality

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In the European statistical framework Quality is seen as a multi-dimensional and complex concept. Member States agreed on a range of actions to be taken in order to ensure the following aspects of the data produced and disseminated:



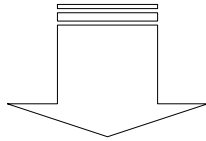
the quality issue is treated as a system not as single

## Quality report

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MS prepare a quality report in order to provide users with information on each of the quality issues of FTS statistics.

### Annual quality report



- indicators are simple to calculate;
- Regulations and recommendations
- - comments required from MS
- comparison with figures of the previous year
- Summary tables also used

The report is made available to the users.

Discussion is still going on in order to widen the set of indicators and to realise a Handbook on quality

## Accuracy

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**Accuracy is essentially concerned with data production and it relates to a set of indicators useful to measure the degree of closeness of the data to the true values.**

These indicators regard:

- ❑ Coverage (thresholds, exclusions)
- ❑ Non-response
- ❑ Estimation (statistical value, CIF/FOB valuation)
- ❑ Revisions (provisional Vs. final figures)
- ❑ Confidentiality

## Quality report: Accuracy issues

Table 1 : Intrastat thresholds (in EUR) applied in 2006

Member State	Exemption thresholds		Simplification thresholds		Statistical value thresholds	
	Arrivals	Dispatches	Arrivals	Dispatches	Arrivals	Dispatches
ITALY	150,000	200,000			10,000,000	10,000,000
Optional comment	From January 2007: <i>exemption thresholds</i> have been raised to 180 and 250 thousands of euro respectively for arrivals and dispatches; statistical value threshold to 20 millions of euro for both flows.					

Table 5 : Adjustments for trade below the threshold in extra-EU trade, 2005-2006

ITALY	Collected data (a)		Adjustments				Level of details
	Standard category		Below the exemption threshold		Late response		
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	
2005	99.8%	99.6%	0.2%	0.4%			No product or partner breakdown
2006	99.8%	99.6%	0.2%	0.4%			No product or partner breakdown
Optional comment	(a) Collected data actually represent the 100%. As a matter of fact all data are collected, but checks on BTT data and its breakdown are different and the balance includes the BTT value as an aggregate.						

## Coherence + Comparability

(1)

Coherence deals with:

to what extent statistics originated from other sources are compatible with the data produced and how well they can be used together

for instance, FTS coherence may be measured:

- by comparison with NA or BoP statistics;
- by comparison with similar figures from other MS (i.e.: Mirror statistics);
- by comparison with data produced by other Institutions in the same MS.

It is usually evaluated with respect to several aspects of data production processes

## Coherence + Comparability

(2)

### Example of coherence table between FTS and other sources.

	FTS	NA	BoP	Business Statistics
Concepts and definitions	Community definitions	Community definitions (RoW national definitions)	IMF manual	Activity sectors
Statistical unit/object/population	Single Transactions		Single Transactions (change of ownership)	Firms, local units
Classification (Nomenclatures)	CN	Institutional sectors	IMF classification	NACE
Geographical break-down	Detailed break-down	EU, Extra-EU, World	Detailed break-down	All partners
Reference period	Monthly	Annual	Quarterly	Annual
Correction method	National correction	National correction	National correction	National correction

Source: Based on Eurostat Quality report 2008

## Quality report: Comparability over space

(1)

Table 18 : Intra-EU asymmetries in value (EUR MIO) and %, 2006

Partner countries	Arrivals				Dispatches			
	IT arrivals	Mirrored dispatches	Discrep. In value	Discrep. In %	IT dispatches	Mirrored arrivals	Discrep. In value	Discrep. In %
Belgium	14,544	15,101	-556	-3.7%	9,415	9,445	-30	-0.3%
Czech Republic	3,111	3,500	-389	-11.1%	3,226	3,258	-33	-1.0%
Denmark	2,299	2,551	-252	-9.9%	2,574	2,688	-113	-4.2%
Germany	58,133	59,505	-1,373	-2.3%	42,964	39,716	3,248	8.2%
Estonia	64	55	8	15.3%	325	270	55	20.2%
Greece	1,799	1,842	-43	-2.3%	6,507	5,772	734	12.7%
Spain	14,336	14,027	309	2.2%	23,631	20,274	3,357	16.6%
France	31,913	34,587	-2,674	-7.7%	38,211	35,257	2,954	8.4%
Ireland	3,750	3,629	121	3.3%	1,687	1,372	315	23.0%
Cyprus	54	37	17	44.9%	734	630	104	16.5%
Latvia	59	97	-38	-39.6%	315	311	4	1.2%
Lithuania	191	238	-47	-19.8%	557	521	36	6.9%
Luxembourg	1,232	1,741	-510	-29.3%	557	448	109	24.3%
Hungary	3,360	3,348	12	0.3%	3,227	2,838	389	13.7%
Malta	170	74	96	129.7%	744	886	-142	-16.0%
Netherlands	19,316	18,882	434	2.3%	7,800	7,347	453	6.2%
Austria	8,659	9,796	-1,137	-11.6%	7,996	7,626	370	4.9%
Poland	5,557	5,765	-209	-3.6%	6,859	6,485	374	5.8%
Portugal	1,538	1,353	185	13.7%	3,601	2,960	641	21.7%
Slovenia	1,845	2,296	-450	-19.6%	2,916	3,426	-510	-14.9%
Slovakia	2,093	2,156	-63	-2.9%	1,548	1,590	-42	-2.7%
Finland	2,258	1,946	311	16.0%	1,588	1,663	-75	-4.5%
Sweden	3,949	3,918	31	0.8%	3,495	3,194	302	9.5%
United Kingdom	12,333	13,669	-1,535	-11.1%	19,758	18,392	1,366	7.4%
<b>EU25</b>	<b>192,564</b>	<b>200,316</b>	<b>-7,751</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>	<b>190,326</b>	<b>176,371</b>	<b>13,955</b>	<b>7.9%</b>
Optional comment								

## Quality report: Comparability over space

(2)

Part of the full table

Table 18 : Intra-EU asymmetries in value (EUR MIO) and %, 2006

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## Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility and Clarity refer to data information environment dealing with:

- ❑ Relevance of variables (how the data meets user needs);
- ❑ Appropriate metadata (classifications);
- ❑ Documentation of the methods used;
- ❑ Information on data quality;
- ❑ Assistance in using and interpreting data;
- ❑ dissemination policy

## Quality report: Accessibility

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Table 17 : Dissemination of international trade statistics

ITALY	Paper/pdf publications				Electronic publications		
	News release	Monthly	Quarterly	Other (yearly, etc)	Database	CD/DVD-Rom	Other (fax, email, etc)
2005	x			x	x	x	x
2006	x			x	x	x	x
<b>Action plan</b>	Please report any scheduled action plan precising the implementation date.						

Source for 2005 information: 2006 Quality Questionnaire

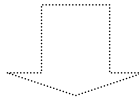
<b>Optional comment</b>	<b>Paper/pdf publications: monthly and quarterly news release and yearbook</b>	
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## Impacts at National level

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Eurostat

□ Quality Report



National level

□ National on-line "quality system" (SIQUAL)

- collects quality information for all the surveys carried out by the Institute.
- Part of the FTS quality report goes into SIQUAL and becomes available for the users.

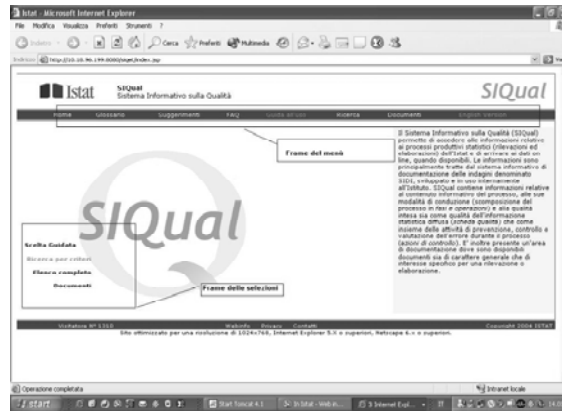
□ Internal documentation system (SIDI) with a wider range of statistical indicators (more technical)



## ISTAT On-line quality information

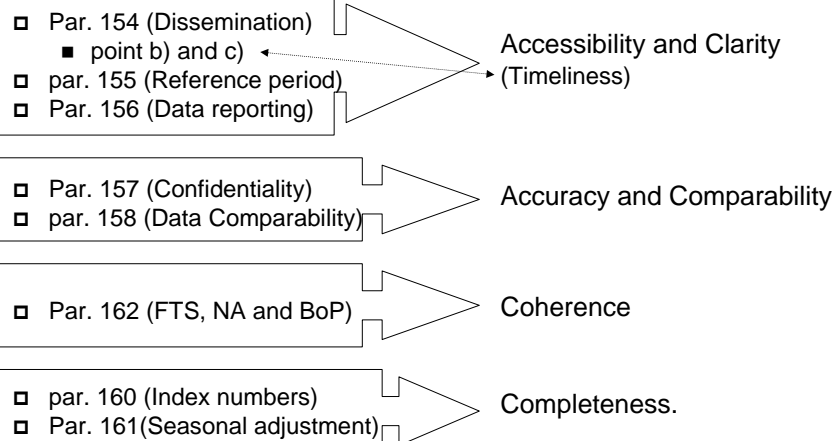
*Home page - La pagina di selezione processi*

La selezione delle indagini di interesse può avvenire attraverso diverse modalità di scelta: Selezione guidata, la lista completa dei processi d'Istituto o attraverso la ricerca per parola chiave. La pagina che permette di effettuare le scelte si presenta inizialmente come nella figura seguente:



## Going back to our chapter 7...

(1)



## Going back to our chapter 7...

(2)

In the present fashion:

### Pros

- Recommendations are easily remembered (they are linked directly to the issue they refer to;
- Several important aspects of quality are considered;
- The fashion of the chapter is in line with the rest of the manual.

## Going back to our chapter 7...

(3)

### Cons

- ❖ It is not easy to understand that each recommendation derives from an underlying quality system (from which Eurostat took the "inspiration");
- ❖ It seems that quality is to be necessarily linked to dissemination, whilst dissemination is itself just a part of the quality process;
- ❖ No clear reference made on quality aspects linked to the production process.

## Questions for further reflections

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(1)

- I. Is it possible to conceive the recommendations given in the chapter in a wider and more systematic quality framework?
- II. If Yes, this could probably imply:
  - Rethinking the structure of the chapter (or add a new chapter?) making a clear reference to quality aims;
  - extending quality issues even to specific production aspects (may be even in other sections of the manual)?
  - Rethink the current subdivision of paragraphs;
  - Recommend some “leading indicators” to be produced for quality reasons

## Questions for further reflections

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(2)

- III. If No, we would have to:
  - Add some other paragraphs in order to emphasize further aspects of reporting and dissemination (for instance Accessibility and Clarity);
  - Develop some of the issues already included in the existing paragraphs in order to update the information;