

Workshop for Developing Countries on the Revision of
the International Recommendations for International
Merchandise Trade Statistics
Bogotá, 31 March - 3 April, 2009

Data Quality and Metadata

(Providing guidance on data quality (reporting, assessment and indicators); Ensuring data quality; Compilation and dissemination of metadata; Main elements of metadata)

Introduction by Matthias Reister

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Data Quality

1. Current recommendation(s)

IMTS, Rev.2 covers the issue of data quality mostly from the perspective of reporting and dissemination (see chapter VII). IMTS:CM contains a chapter on issues of data quality control (IMTS:CM, chapter 11).

Since the introduction of IMTS, Rev.2 in 1998, a number of quality frameworks, reports and indicators were developed and implemented by international and regional organizations (IMF, OECD and Eurostat). Furthermore, separate chapters on data quality were included in newly developed international recommendations in other areas such as distributive trade statistics and industrial statistics.

Therefore, it is suggested to cover the issue of data quality also in IMTS, Rev.3.

Data quality

2. Result from world wide consultations

Question 14: Do you agree that	YES in %	NO in %	No Op. in %	N/A in %
(i) that IMTS, Revision 3, should provide recommendations on quality of international merchandise trade statistics	91	1	6	2
Developed (34)	85	3	12	0
Developing and transitional (81)	94	0	4	2
(ii) that this includes reporting of data quality?	83	3	12	3
Developed (34)	82	6	12	0
Developing and transitional (81)	83	1	12	4
(iii) that this includes assessment of data quality?	83	3	12	2
Developed (34)	76	9	15	0
Developing and transitional (81)	85	1	11	2
(iv) that this includes the use of some data quality indicators?	88	2	10	1
Developed (34)	85	3	12	0
Developing and transitional (81)	89	1	9	1

Data Quality

3. UNSD observation of wwc result

Comments from 50 countries were received on this question:

- Despite the overall support numerous countries have concerns about the scope of these recommendations (for example, whether indices and surveys and asymmetries will be covered) and how such guidance will be provided.
- There seems to be a preference for the provision of detailed guidelines or description of best practices/ examples in the revised Compilers Manual instead of IMTS, Rev.3 where recommendations might focus more on providing general guidelines.
- Many developed countries want that such recommendations/ guidelines are not in conflict with their established practices/ quality frameworks.
- Several developing countries request that the revised recommendations provide practical guidance on how to ensure data quality in IMTS.

Data Quality

4. UNSD draft proposal and conclusion of the virtual meeting, Nov. 2008

UNSD proposal

- **It is recommended** that countries see the quality assurance and quality assessment programmes with respect to international merchandise trade statistics as a strategic goal and develop those programs as an integral part of a system wide approach to measuring and enhancing quality of the national economic statistics.
- Countries are encouraged to undertake the quality review of their merchandise trade statistics every **[four to five years]** or more frequently if significant methodological changes or changes in the data sources occur.
- **It is further recommended** that countries establish a systematic reporting on the trade data quality and use in such reporting some data quality indicators.

Data Quality

4. UNSD draft proposal and conclusion of the virtual meeting, Nov. 2008

The EG-IMTS

- Agreed, in general, with the UNSD proposal with clarification that (1) the recommendations refer to national self assessment (and not external assessment) and the subject of the quality review is not just data but the trade statistics program, (2) the frequency of quality reviews is to be decided by countries but should be at least every 5 years;
- Advised that a separate chapter on data quality and good practice should be included in the Compilers Manual (taking into account experiences of Eurostat, the IMF and OECD).

Metadata

1. Current recommendation(s)

... Therefore, it is recommended that data compilers:

- Publicly disseminate documentation on their sources and methods;
- Publicly announce scheduled release dates;
- Provide regular monthly reporting of data to the user community through publications and/or electronic media;
- Regularly revise data (when additional information is available), taking into due consideration user needs for reliable statistics.

Refer to IMTS, Rev.2, para. 154

2. Result from the 2006 NCDP Questionnaire

Question 11.04 :	Yes	No	N/A
Do you make documentation on your sources and methods publicly available?	74.4	18.2	7.4

Metadata

3. Result from world wide consultations

Question 15: Do you agree that IMTS, Revision 3, should provide additional recommendations on the compilation and dissemination of metadata as an integral part of the regular work programme of trade statistics compilers?	Yes	No	No Op.	N/A
Total of 115 replies	90	5	3	2
Developed (34)	88	9	3	0
Developing and transitional (81)	90	4	4	2

4. UNSD observation of wwc result

Comments from 41 countries were received on this question:

- Many comments suggest providing a list of items or a template, preferable in the Compilers Manual.
- Some countries warn that agreement on details will be difficult to achieve and a few countries say there is not much need for such additional recommendations.
- Yet, many countries stress the importance of metadata for the correct interpretation and comparison of IMTS.
- Several countries make reference to existing reporting standards such as the IMF's GDDS or the reporting requirements within the EU.

Metadata

5. UNSD draft proposal and conclusion of the virtual meeting, Nov. 2008

UNSD proposal

- **It is recommended** that countries see the development and dissemination of metadata on international merchandise trade statistics as a high priority activity in order to provide necessary technical details to assist users in finding the most appropriate ways to satisfy their information needs.
- **It is further recommended** that, the metadata for merchandise trade statistics be developed and adopted in compliance with the general approach adopted by a country for metadata on economic statistics.
 - A separate section in IMTS, Rev. 3 on metadata should be drafted which would explain the concept of metadata, its components and promote the implementation of the metadata compilation and dissemination taking into account the experiences of Eurostat, the IMF and.
 - The updated version of the IMTS Compilers Manual should contain a separate section/ chapter on good practices in this area.

Metadata

5. UNSD draft proposal and conclusion of the virtual meeting, Nov. 2008

The EG-IMTS

- Agreed, in general, with the proposals provided by UNSD
- Proposed to simplify the language and provide definitions of the main terms used in the text (a glossary of metadata);
- Advised that examples of good practices should be included in the Compilers Manual.

Experiences from UN Comtrade

Current situation

- Collection of crucial metadata is often very difficult or impossible to obtain
 - also the majority of countries do not include metadata in their data submissions to international organizations
- The same metadata information from difference sources sometimes contradicts each other.
 - For example, trade system from NCDP differs with trade system mentioned in the website. Any attempt to clarify is sometimes in vain.

Available metadata in UN Comtrade

- Explanatory notes which consist of
 - Trade system, valuation, partner country attribution, original currency, conversion factor and original reported commodity classification.
- Publication notes which consist of
 - Date of receive, data provider, date of release, information regarding data revision or any important processing notes
- Link to results of NCDP

Thank you for your attention