

Foreword

In 2010, at its forty-first session, the Statistical Commission adopted^[1] the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010)*, while urging the Task Force^[2] on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS) to give high importance to the development of corresponding compilation guidance. TFSITS discussed the outline of the Compiler's Guide for MSITS 2010 as early as March 2010, but started to work on it only in late 2011 to ensure close coordination with the ongoing work of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on its compilation guidance for the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, 6th edition (BPM6)*. TFSITS was supported in its work by the UN Expert Group on the Compilation of Statistics of International Trade in Services, which was especially established for the purpose of developing the Compiler's Guide.

The Compiler's Guide is aligned with the international statistical standards in the field of economic statistics, in particular the *System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA)*, the BPM6, the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment, 4th edition, 2008* and the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics, 2008*.

The preparation of the Guide was organized by means of four virtual meetings and one face-to-face meeting. The members of the UN Expert Group, including all members of TFSITS, participated actively in these meetings. The group of about 70 experts from various national agencies of developed and developing countries exchanged hundreds of inputs in numerous iterations of successive drafts of the chapters. The Guide benefited from strong cooperation among international organizations, as well as from the advice of consultants, the invaluable input of a large number of member countries' experts and the many comments received during the successive worldwide consultations and online discussion forums, conducted under the auspices of the Task Force.

The Guide will help to harmonize and improve the ways in which statisticians at the national level collect, compile and disseminate trade in services statistics. While international standards in economic statistics^[3] are in the process of being implemented, the publication of the present Guide is timely, providing the statistical community with guidelines, best practices, case studies and practical advice on the compilation of trade in services statistics. Those statistics consist of transactions between residents and non-residents in services classified by the *Extended Balance of Payments Services Classification (EBOPS)* categories and by country of residence; they also include foreign affiliate trade statistics (FATS), as well as statistics on modes of supply. The overarching aim of the Guide is to increase the availability and quality of those statistics in order to fulfil the urgent need and demand for such data by policymakers, researchers, market analysts and the public in general.

The Guide is first of all intended for use by statisticians of national statistics offices, central banks and ministries of trade and investment or other agencies engaged in the compilation of trade in services statistics. We recommend that countries implement the guidelines progressively, taking into account their national information needs, priorities and resources. The Guide will not only be available as a printed publication, but as a living document in electronic format on the TFSITS website, where further country examples and practices can be regularly added or updated, especially as new compilation techniques become available over time.

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 24 (E/2010/24)*, chap. I. B, decision 41/104, para. (b).

[2] In March 2014, the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services merged with the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics.

[3] *System of National Accounts 2008*, (2008 SNA), Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 2/Rev.5 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XVII.29) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual*, 6th ed. (BPM6) (Washington, D.C., 2009).