

C. Main types of institutional arrangements

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5.10. *Different institutional arrangements.* The kinds of institutional arrangements in countries, and their governance and mechanism of cooperation, depend on many factors. The designation of the national statistical office as the agency responsible for the dissemination of official statistics and, the coordination of data collection and processing, is the most common practice in countries. Responding to the UNSD questionnaire in 2006, 78 per cent of countries confirmed that the compilation and dissemination of IMTS are normally the responsibility of national statistical offices.^[4] However, in the remaining countries, the official international merchandise trade statistics are compiled and disseminated by other governmental agencies, such as statistical departments of the customs administrations, central banks or a dedicated unit in a ministry.

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1. *The statistical office as the responsible agency*

5.11. *Typical arrangements.* The statistical office bears the overall responsibility for a country's official trade statistics, including issuance of methodological guidelines, raw data editing and processing, database maintenance and dissemination of official statistics. The customs administration bears responsibility for the collection of the basic records and for supplying the statistical office with these records on a regular basis: normally, customs would carry out some editing of records before passing them to the statistical office. Central banks and other governmental agencies provide additional information on trade flows not covered by customs records. The statistical office further edits all input data and merges them into a consistent data set.

5.12. *Cooperation with other involved agencies.* The reliance by the statistical office on data from sources external to itself requires close cooperative relationships with all governmental departments and agencies that provide data. The statistical office and the statistical unit of customs - the largest data supplier - along with other source agencies, should establish memorandums of understanding so that the roles and responsibilities of each party with regard to all aspects of the production and distribution of official statistics are clearly defined and elaborated in sufficient detail. It is good practice to periodically review the memorandums of understanding and update them as needed.

Box V.1 Administrative agreement between the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) (the responsible agency) and the Federal Fiscal Authority (FFA) of Germany

The agreement between the FSO and the FFA of Germany describes the cooperation between both parties concerning the exchange of statistical customs data on external trade. It is not a legal act in a narrow sense but is nevertheless binding for both parties. One important feature of the agreement is that the main points and the legal basis are established in the main paper. Technical and other details, which may change frequently, are specified in the annex. Through this arrangement, change in these details is facilitated without changing the main agreement. The main topics covered by the administrative agreement include:

1. Transmission of the statistical customs data

(a) *Scope:* The legal basis for the transmission and its scope is described here. The FFA commits to transmitting the relevant statistical data to the FSO after technical and methodical examination. The data are checked for formal validity (code checks) and if a mistake is detected, the responsible customs unit or the participant is obliged to correct the data. Only correct (plausible) data are transmitted to the FSO. Further details are specified in the annex.

(b) *Form of transmission:* Basic details for the transmission of the data (institutions involved in data transmission, and data format) are specified. Further details (e.g., a list of variables) are specified in the annex.

(c) *Time and deadline of data transmission:* The FSO retrieves the relevant data electronically on a daily basis.

2. Corrections

Corrections of already retrieved statistical data are made through a specific revision procedure.

3. Transmission of master data

The legal basis for the transmission of master data (e.g., identification number, name, address of the company, contact persons) is mentioned here. Master data are updated on a monthly basis. Details are specified in the annex.

4. Statistical confidentiality and tax secrecy

The FSO commits to obeying the legal obligations concerning statistical confidentiality and tax secrecy.

5. Contact persons

Both the FSO and the FFA commit to naming contact persons for clarification of methodical and technical issues, as specified in the annex.

6. Application and amendment

The administrative agreement can be updated or changed by mutual agreement.

Box V.2 Table of contents of the Statistics Canada/Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding contains seven sections as follows:

Section I – General Roles and Responsibilities

Section II – Data Collection

Section III – Data Transmission

Section IV – Data Disclosure and Dissemination

Section V – Data Quality

Section VI – Harmonized System

Section VII – Costs

Each of the above sections is further subdivided into three subheadings, namely:

- 1) CBSA's Roles and Responsibilities
- 2) StatisticsCanada's Roles and Responsibilities
- 3) Joint CBSA/StatisticsCanadaRoles and Responsibilities

Finally, the MoU contains the following lists:

List 1 – Import CBSA Transmission Data Variables

List 2 – Canadian Automated Export Declaration (CAED) Record Layout

List 3 – Import HS Update Data Variables

2. The customs administration as the responsible agency

5.13. *Typical arrangements.* In this case, customs is responsible for all activities ranging from the collection of basic records to the dissemination of the official international merchandise trade statistics. The statistical office and the central bank may provide supplementary data and would normally make the adjustments necessary to publish aggregated trade data in accordance with the SNA/BOP requirements. It is good practice for customs to use additional data sources as required, and to implement an appropriate quality assurance programme in order to ensure that the detailed trade statistics disseminated by customs are of the necessary quality.

5.14. *Cooperation with other involved agencies.* Two conflicting requirements that customs usually face are: (a) the need to diminish barriers to the flow of trade, which leads to the simplification and reduction of reporting requirements imposed on traders; and (b) increased the need of users (both government agencies and the business community) for the availability of trade data of enhanced quality and detail within a shorter time frame. To meet these requirements and to ensure that any necessary additional sources of data are being used and that compilation procedures comply with the recommended methodology, customs should closely cooperate with other agencies, particularly the statistical office.

3. Central bank as the responsible agency

5.15. In a small number of countries, the central bank is responsible for the compilation and dissemination of official international merchandise trade statistics. Under this arrangement, the bank receives the customs records on a regular basis, and compiles and disseminates the trade statistics with an approach similar to that used in the statistical office-led compilation described above. Central banks functioning as the government agency responsible for trade statistics should ensure that these statistics are compiled and disseminated in accordance with the international recommendations for merchandise trade statistics. It is good practice for recompilation and dissemination of trade statistics on the BOP basis to be undertaken as a separate activity so as to allow a proper focus to be placed on the respective purposes and characteristics of IMTS and BOP statistics.

4. Other governmental bodies as the responsible agency

5.16. Other governmental bodies such as ministries of economy and ministries of trade can also be designated as the agencies responsible for official international merchandise trade statistics. Such arrangements may result in the production of high-quality trade statistics if the designated body follows the recommendations in IMTS 2010 and the good practices described in the present *Manual*.

[4] See International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Supplement to the Compilers Manual (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08. XVII.9 NB E only and Corr. 1), para. 1.3.