

D. Inter-agency collaboration on data quality

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9.51. *World Trade Organization Common Data Set.*^[26] The Common Data Set (CDS) constitutes a joint effort by Eurostat, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UNSD, UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization to reconcile their time series on merchandise trade statistics, using international standards as a benchmark. Each agency is in charge of supplying figures for a predefined set of reporting economies. Reconciliations, coordinated by the WTO, consist of scrutinizing significant differences between the agencies' data to determine the best value. In many instances, this results in finding an agreement on substitution of values, with the objective for each participating agency being to review and correct its own data. The CDS database, which gives access to statistics and documentation on both officially reported and reconciled series, covers annual total merchandise export and import values of over 200 economies, whose series are updated annually and presented back to the year 1995.^[27]

9.52. *Cooperation on methodology, data compilation and dissemination.* The international organizations active in the area of merchandise trade statistics are part of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TF-IMTS) in which issues and developments on methodology and databases, including quality issues and the use of SDMX, are discussed on a regular basis. Members of the Task Force regularly participate in the Expert-Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics which assists UNSD in the update of the international recommendations and this *Manual*. OECD and UNSD implemented the coordinated collection of annual data which avoids duplication of efforts and ensures that both organizations use exactly the same data for OECD countries. Indeed, both organizations went much further: they agreed on processing standards for annual trade statistics and implemented a joint processing system. All international organizations have full access to the UNSD UN Comtrade database, which allows the use of exactly the same data by all organizations and fosters a continuing commitment by international organizations to ensuring that highest quality standards are followed and that the issues that arise are addressed.

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[26] See http://imts.wto.org/common_dataset_e.htm.

[27] See para. 10.14 for an additional example on the harmonization of trade statistics within the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.