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## **National Accounts - International Trade Statistics**

### **OECD TRADE INDICATORS PROJECT 2002**

**Paper prepared by Statistics Directorate, OECD - France**

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## OECD TRADE INDICATORS PROJECT 2002

### Introduction

The OECD has a rich experience in trade analysis and trade data collection, processing and dissemination.

Trade issues have been analysed from a variety of angles: globally as part of OECD's ongoing work on monitoring and outlook of OECD economies, sectoral ( for instance agricultural trade issues) or by other characteristics, such as technology content.

One of the main driving forces of increased interest in trade issues is the need to get a better understanding of the effects of the changing nature and true dimension of international transactions in a context of globalisation and multinational firms.

Management has asked the NAD/TIAS Section look into the matter of trade indicators. It should be underlined that - for the time being - this project, or rather the collective reflection process leading to a set of indicators, will have to be conducted in addition to an already increased workload without any supplementary human or financial resources.

It seems realistic to plan for a scaled, progressive approach, involving available OECD expertise and also experts and agencies outside the OECD.

### 1. Different phases

The first issue to be addressed is what the stated objective(s) is (are). This "mission statement " still needs to be worked out and will influence timeframe and complexity of the undertaking.

A **first phase** would consist of an internal **stocktaking**, by which all available OECD indicators using detailed trade data (**merchandise trade**), would be listed. Merchandise trade still represents some 80 % of total trade flows and presents the advantage of commodity detail. Conversions to industry-level are possible.

In a **second phase**, the availability of **BoP-based goods and services** data would be analysed for suitability and possibility of inclusion.

In a **third phase**, a **selection process** would be made amongst the available indicators and possible indicators, which have not been identified so far, be proposed for discussion and eventual inclusion in the trade indicators project.

## 2. The process

A logical possibility would be to launch the investigation first at OECD and then extend to the outside. It is proposed to set up an internal **Task Force**, composed of members from:

- Statistics Directorate
- Economics Department
- Science, Technology and Industry Directorate
- Trade Directorate, and
- Agriculture Directorate

The first task would consist of drawing up an **inventory** of existing trade indicators, document their perceived strengths and weaknesses and to categorize them into a framework (e.g. Basic indicators, Trade Openness Indicators, Concentration Indicators, Competitiveness Indicators, Specialisation and Diversification Indicators and the like).

A second step would consist of starting a structured consultation process with recognized external experts and institutions. A possibility would be to launch ( after sufficient preparation) a series of **Roundtable discussion** with other international bodies and national experts who are willing to contribute. The form of these discussions could take the form

- a) of more **informal meetings at OECD** (without simultaneous interpretation), or
- b) of an **electronic discussion forum** to be created.

A possible additional means for launching the process is the **lead country approach** by which a or several OECD countries volunteer to focus on a particular sub-set of indicators in which they have particularly relevant expertise.

## 3. The Profile

The OECD Trade Indicators Project would, obviously , have to correspond to the nature and general focus of OECD work. In this sense it would be in support of a range of activities across the organisation and also play the role of an integrated and harmonised tool for analysis and research.

It should not duplicate existing data products outside OECD.

An important function could be performed by the project in reviewing and documenting different approaches across more fragmented activities. This integration function could play a considerable role in fostering and facilitating future research.

Given the probable extend of work to be conducted , it seems likely that the Trade Indicators Project would stretch over a two year time horizon.

**Delegates are invited to comment on the proposed outline and to indicate**

- a) **Where they see a particular useful function OECD could play**
- b) **Which types of trade indicators they consider particularly relevant**
- c) **If they would be willing to participate in the collective effort to be undertaken**
- d) **Which process they consider best**