

For Official Use

STD/NA/ITS(2001)14



Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

26-Nov-2001

English - Or. English

STATISTICS DIRECTORATE

STD/NA/ITS(2001)14
For Official Use

National Accounts - International Trade Statistics

HARMONIZATION OF FOREIGN TRADE IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Paper prepared by Ivan Skultety
Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

3rd OECD MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS
Château de la Muette, Paris
5-7 December 2001
Beginning at 9:30 a.m. on the first day

Contact: skultety@statistics.sk

JT00117327

Document complet disponible sur OLIS dans son format d'origine
Complete document available on OLIS in its original format

English - Or. English

HARMONIZATION OF FOREIGN TRADE IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Introduction

The Slovak Republic is the newest Member country of OECD. This year is the first year for common co-operation in all activities of OECD. Our government has set up a permanent mission to OECD for establishing and maintaining high level contacts. In the Statistical Office we have a responsible service for co-operation with OECD.

Since this year we have established very close and friendly relations with OECD in trade statistics and in many other fields of statistics (such as agriculture, national accounts, transport, energy, etc.).

Let me briefly present the statistical system of the Slovak Republic and then make some particular remarks on trade statistics.

1. From the history of Slovak statistics

First statistical survey in Slovakia is considered to be a nationwide registration of population carried out in Hungary in 1715. In 1857 under the reign of Maria Teresia, the first modern census of the total population was conducted. Until 1918 statistical service in Slovakia lied within the authority of the Royal Hungarian Central Statistical Office in Budapest.

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 statistical surveys were carried out by the State Statistical Office in Prague. Independent Slovak Statistical Office was established in 1939, but existed only for a short period during the Slovak State, till 1944. In 1945 - 1951 statistics was a part of the State Planing and Statistical Office. In 1951 the State Statistical Office was re-established and simultaneously Slovak Statistical Office created that was subordinated to the State Statistical Office. This state lasted until 1960. Then until 1967 statistics was a part of the Central Office of State Supervision and Statistics. In 1967 an independent statistical institution State Statistical Office was re-established together with the Slovak Statistical Office. In 1969 within the federation structure of Czechoslovakia the Slovak Statistical Office became the central authority of state administration in the Slovak Republic. At this time a network of regional and district statistical departments was also developed.

In 1990 a major transformation of economics begun, creating thus new tasks and conditions for the Statistical Office. Substantial course of transformation of Slovak statistics was set by the conception of state statistics passed by the Slovak government in the same year.

Since January 1993 after the establishment of the independent state the name of the office changed to Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic which is the central body of state administration for statistics.

In mid-term time horizon the aim of Slovak statistics is to realise mainly transformation of statistical system in such a way that its contents and methods would facilitate surveying socio-economic phenomena

and processes in the conditions of market economy, at the same time ensuring harmonisation with statistics of European Union countries.

2. Statistical legislation

The legal basis of the Slovak official statistical system is laid down in two acts: **Law No. 322/1992 Digest on State Statistics** and **Law No. 45/1993 Digest on Statistical Surveys of the Population**. The statistical system is also depending on **Law No. 26/1995 Digest on State Information System** and on the **Law No. 52/1998 Digest on Protection of Personal Data in Information Systems**.

The *Law on State Statistics*, which regulates the composition of the statistical system is now under revision and the new act is foreseen to come into force on 1st of January 2002. On the 12th of July 2001 the Slovak Government approved the bill which was passed through the first reading in Parliament last week.

The main **goals of the revision** of the current *State Law on Statistics* are the following:

1. To fully **harmonise** the statistical legislation with EU Council Regulation on Statistics. SOSR has consulted both EUROSTAT and several European National Statistical Institutes in order to define the act in line with the EU requirements.
2. To **integrate** currently regulations into one legal act.
3. To **standardise the reporting** obligations within groups of different data providing units (physical entities such as entrepreneurs, legal entities etc.).
4. To **harmonise the terminology**.
5. To make the **confidentiality rules** more **precise** and specific than before.
6. To enable SOSR **access to administrative data** for statistical purposes. The current law is not clear in this sense and has caused some trouble for SOSR.
7. To lengthen the duration of the *State Statistical Survey Program*. Currently the program is adopted annually. According to the new Act the programme will be running for three years.
8. To change the **nomination procedure of the president** of SOSR. For the time being the president is nominated by the Government. In future he/she will be nominated by the President of the Slovak Republic for five years period (which can be renewed once).
9. To **increase the power of the president of SOSR** in defining the internal organisation of SOSR. Currently the structure of regional offices is specified in the act. According to the new act the president of the SOSR is free to decide on the structure of the national network of statistical bodies (e.g. the number of regional statistical offices) and their interaction.

3. Harmonisation with the ESS

If it is mentioned before that the history of the independent Slovak statistics is relatively short in comparison with some other countries, the same can be said about the process of its harmonisation with the EU statistics.

- the government of the SR that arose from the 1998 elections declared the integration into the EU to be among its priorities
- the harmonisation of statistics became the priority of the new SO SR management.

While screening exercises were carried out at the European Commission level, we considered it important to do some internal screening too. We wanted to obtain a detailed review of the actual European statistical Acquis (the content of individual regulations and recommendations) in order to analyse to what extent our present statistics corresponds with the European requirements.

Regarding the fact that duties concerning other resorts occurred during the screening, after a short break similar meetings continued on the ground of a working group 12 – statistics. Among its members are representatives of all ministries concerned, of the Government Office etc. These meetings also helped to clarify the division of work, competency and tasks among the ministries dealing with the resort statistical survey.

The energy we spent paid back at the forthcoming bilateral screening meetings in Brussels in May 2000. Consequently, a Negotiation Position was submitted to the European Commission, where the Slovak Republic declared acceptance of the statistical Acquis as well as readiness to implement it fully before the date of the entrance of the SR into the EU. The chapter „Statistics“ was temporarily closed on 25th May 2000 and the decision was formally confirmed on 14th June 2000 at the second Accession Conference at the level of the ministers of foreign affairs.

Positive evaluation of the Slovak statistics was reflected also in the EC's Regular Report for the year 2000, where a significant progress in the transformation of the SR into the European Statistical System was observed. An improvement was achieved mainly in the areas of demographic and social statistics, in macro-economical and enterprise statistics. The EU considered the administration structure for the implementation of the Acquis in the field of statistics sufficient, the SO SR as adequately staffed and accordingly competent for the Acquis implementation. However, on behalf of finalisation of the harmonisation of the Slovak statistics with the UE requirements, the EC pointed out the inevitability of a financial support.

4. Vision of official statistics

- A. To improve quality, promptness and relevance of information provided
- B. To improve credit of official statistics, increase confidence of the public in the context of government policy on openness (improving access to information for the public)
- C. To harmonise statistics with the EU standards (classifications, nomenclatures, methodology, outputs)
- D. To rationalise statistical surveys (sample surveys, using information technology for contact without questionnaires, e-questionnaires)

- E. To put administrative sources to better use
- F. To update and complete statistical register.

5. Foreign Trade Statistics

Foreign trade statistics is completely compatible with European standards in statistics relating trading of goods with non-member countries after adoption of the new Customs Law and Decree Ministry of the Finance SR laying down certain provisions of this law, which came into force 1 July 2001.

We also meet the requirements and methods for providing data to OECD and try our best to be in time and of high quality.

The data are also regularly transmitted to the Database COMEXT of EUROSTAT. The nomenclature of countries and territories (GEONOM) is applied for compilation of external trade statistics.

Statistical data of foreign trade includes information on goods which were imported into Slovak Republic or were stored in customs warehouses or free zones and subsequently released into the free circulation regime or into the regime with economic impact i.e. into the regime of inward processing in drawback system or suspension system, into temporary use regime and into the regime of processing under customs control. Concerning exports, there are included all goods exported from Slovak Republic for propose of permanent keeping or of processing abroad and goods stored in customs warehouses or in free zones.

Some data are publish in USD or Euro (or other currency), and they are converted on the basis of average exchange rate for given period by exchange rate list of National Bank of Slovakia.

Since the independence of the Slovak Republic on 1th January 1993, the foreign trade with OECD countries is rapidly increasing.

This trend shows that:

- the share of imports from OECD countries in 1993 was 33 % of total imports and increased to 74.8 % in 2000;
- the share of exports to OECD countries in 1993 was 32.6 % of total exports and increased to 91.6 % in 2000.

It is important to note that between years 1993 and 2000 the number of OECD Member countries increased as well (new members other that the Slovak Republic: Mexico, Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland).

The main economic partners in the year 2000 are:

- Germany with a share in imports of 25.1 % and in exports of 26.8 %
- The Czech Republic with an import share of 14.7 % and an export share of 17,4 %
- These two countries are followed by Italy, Austria, and France, but with considerably lower shares.

The implementation of the INTRASTAT system the basic problem in the area of foreign trade because of great financial, personal, legislation and space demands. At present, the timetable of the system implementation was elaborated with the quantification of all above-mentioned demands. INTRASTAT

system is defined as a priority of SO SR. Therefore the project “Implementation of INTRASTAT systems“ was drafted within framework of National PHARE programme.

With the aim to meet a fixed deadline of INTRASTAT system introduction - 1st January 2004 – the process of the implementation was divided into several phases:

- Preparation and background work
- Legislation support
- Software support
- Hardware support
- Personal and space support
- Support for the creation of importers/exporters register (undertaking EUROSTAT).

At present, the project is under approving procedure in European Commission. Acceptation of this project will set up necessary condition for introduction of INTRASTAT system from 1st January 2004. In regards with European law approximation in this area 10 new employees were confirmed for dealing with this task and with tasks relating to the project. When all planed activities are carried out successfully, SO SR will be able to ensure starting of INTRASTAT system from January 2004.

At the end of my presentation I would like to appreciate the co-operation with OECD and with Eurostat. Concerning the latter, our participation in pilot projects is very useful and precious with regard to the ongoing harmonisation process.