



STATISTICS DIRECTORATE

National Accounts and Economic Statistics - International Trade Statistics

Item 5 e): The Common Data Set of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (update)

**7TH OECD INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS EXPERT MEETING ITS
and OECD-EUROSTAT MEETING OF EXPERTS IN TRADE-IN-SERVICES STATISTICS (TIS)**

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THE COMMON DATA SET OF THE TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (UPDATE)

Why an inter-agency Common Data Set?

1. International agencies compile and publish merchandise trade statistics often with different timeframes or from different national sources with varying revision schedules or estimation and adjustment methods. They also may apply different exchange rates to convert national currencies to dollar values. All these elements often result in users facing different figures for the same time-series of individual countries and ensuing aggregates.

2. To address this problem and also contribute to the ongoing process of harmonization of data between different international agencies, the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics endorsed the idea of producing, maintaining and disseminating a common data set on total merchandise exports and imports by country.

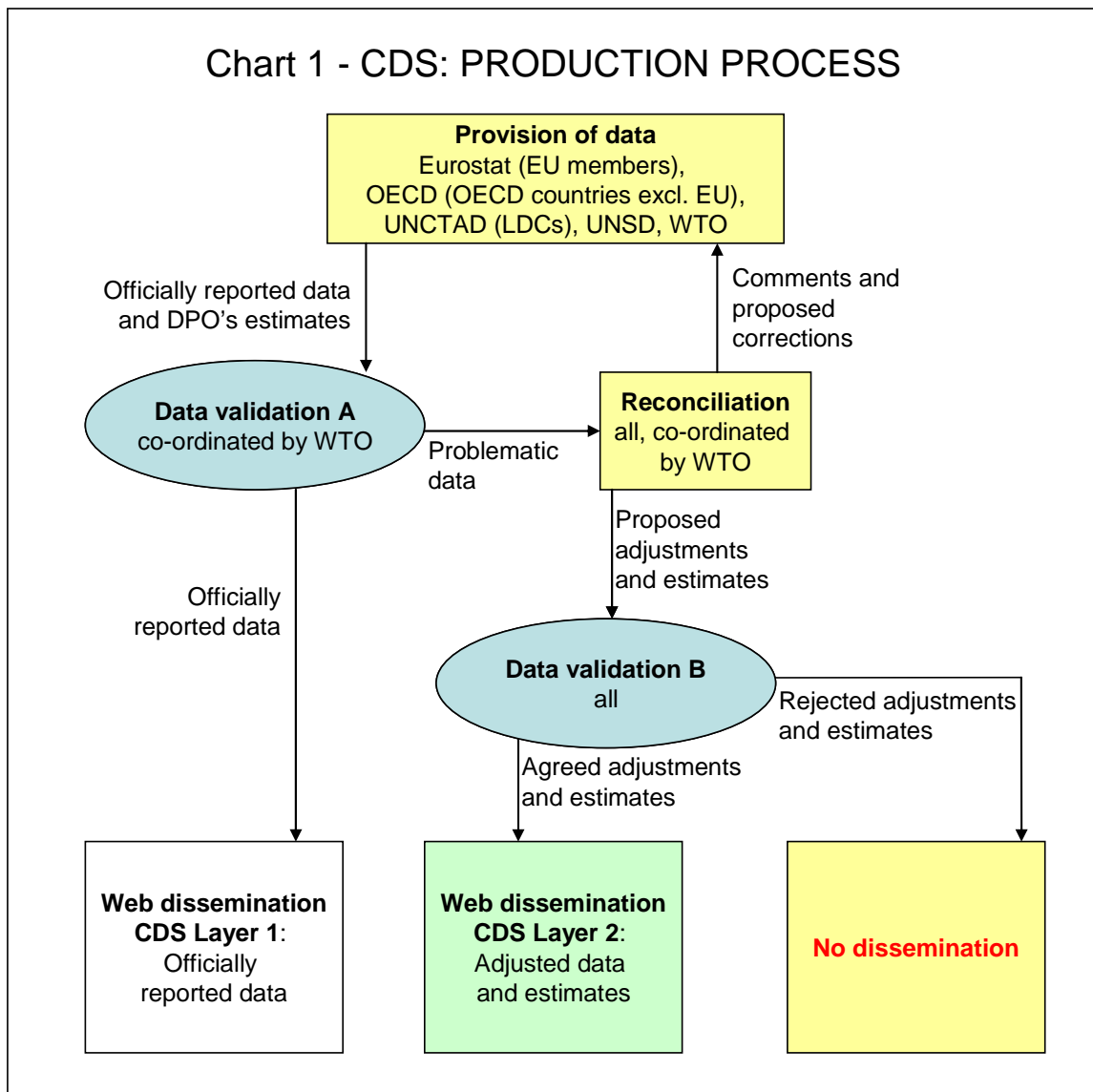
The principal objectives

- Significant improvement in the coverage, consistency, quality and timeliness of aggregate merchandise trade statistics.
- National statistical offices have easy access to their own and other countries' data and metadata in a standardized, easily comparable format; and to estimates made by international organizations when countries do not report, or report with a long delay.
- Analysts, policy makers and other users are able to easily access analytically valuable data.
- Participating international agencies maximize the use of scarce human resources through work sharing while developing an extremely useful collaboration and co-operation at the working level.

How does it work?

3. The participating agencies, that is, Eurostat, OECD, UNSD, UNCTAD and WTO beforehand agreed on the scope of the data set and on the responsibility for data provision for individual countries. The countries were distributed among the various data providers according to their memberships and specialization. For example, Eurostat provides data for its 25 members, the OECD for its member countries that are not part of the European Union, UNCTAD supplies data for the LDCs and the remainder of the countries has been split between UNSD and WTO with the WTO estimating data of countries for which no official source is available.

4. After defining data ownership, the international agencies engaged in a time-consuming reconciliation exercise which resulted in the current Common data Set. The different steps of the exercise are described in chart 1 below:



Progress since the meeting in 2005

5. The Task Force decided that the data set be provided online through its website.
6. An important feature of the Common Data Set is that country data should concord with international concepts and definitions. For that purpose, the Task Force agreed to present the data set according to two different layers, that is, officially reported data on one hand and adjusted/estimated data on the other. Users are provided with the necessary metadata and can choose the data layer according to their requirements.
7. Currently, the CDS is presented at the Task Force's website in spreadsheet format. Work is concentrating on developing database structures that allow more automatic reconciliation procedures and provide users with a more user-friendly interface. The use of SDMX is investigated and it is planned to have the application in place by end 2006.

Example of the CDS data set**CDS: Dominican Republic exports, in million dollars**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Officially reported data	966	805	834	1041	
Adjusted data and estimates	5737 A	5276 A	5165 A	5471 A	5750 A

Metadata**Dominican Republic**

Data providing agency: UNSD. Source: NCB.

Exports:

COMMENTS: Data are sourced from BOP statistics. COVERAGE: Data exclude processing zones trade. ADJUSTMENT DESCRIPTION: COV - inclusion of Processing Zones Trade from NS.

CDS: Hong Kong, China exports, in million dollars

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Officially reported data	201860	189894	200092	223762	259314
Adjusted data and estimates	202683 A	191066 A	201928 A	228708 A	265543 A

Metadata**Hong Kong, China**

Data providing agency: UNSD. Source: NSO.

Exports:

COVERAGE: Data exclude non-monetary gold trade. ADJUSTMENT DESCRIPTION: COV - inclusion of gold trade from UN/Comtrade.

CDS: Bhutan exports, in million dollars

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Officially reported data	103	106	111	154	
Adjusted data and estimates	103	106	113 A	133 A	175 E

Metadata**Bhutan**

Data providing agency: UNCTAD. Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Exports:

ADJUSTMENT DESCRIPTION: COR - 02-03: latest NS.