

Simplification of the Intrastat System - Users versus Providers of Statistical Information

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The Intrastat system was introduced as a replacement of the data source after establishment of the single market on EU territory. The system collects data, which are necessary for the compilation of the statistics on trade between Member States, directly from consignees and consignors of goods and the system has close link with the value-added tax (VAT) system.

In comparison with the system based on customs declaration, the Intrastat system is significant simplification with regard to the number of involved companies as well as the extend of collected information. On the other hand, both systems have common features in the coverage of different type of goods and movements and in the definition of variables.

Data surveyed within the Intrastat system enable to compile foreign trade statistics which is a input for the national accounts and the balance of payments – main users of the data at national level. Intrastat data at the level of the Community allow monitoring development of the single market and forming European policies such as agricultural or trade one.

Requirements of users and providers of statistical information are contradictory; while users request the most detail information, providers ask for the simplification of the reporting either through complete exemption from the reporting obligation or through its simplification concerning the number and definition of variables.

From the providers point of view the most problematic variables are the commodity code – eight-digit code of the Combined Nomenclature subheading, net mass and statistical value.

Exempting further companies from the reporting obligation within the Intrastat system demands from the statisticians to develop such statistical methods and tools which will enable to maintain the sufficient quality of disseminated information and its comparability within the Community as well as within the world.

Adaptation of the Intrastat system taking into account the availability of information at the providers (e.g. collection of invoice value instead of statistical value) allows facilitating their reporting obligation. However task of statisticians is to define the techniques for estimation of missing and simplified information.