

Production of International Trade Statistics in Eurostat

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Paper describes production process of international trade statistics in Eurostat. The detailed data on trade in goods between 27 Member States of the European Union (Intrastat) and the statistics on the EU trade with non-member countries (Extrastat) are collected on a monthly basis from the European trade operators and transmitted to Eurostat via relevant national statistical authorities. Eurostat further compiles the official statistics for the EU and euro area from the data provided by the Member States.

Production of trade statistics is characterised by several specific features:

- (i) The detailed trade data distinguishing around 9500 product codes of Combined Nomenclature (CN), more than 200 partner countries, 2 flows, and dozens of indicators represent huge volume of data to be transmitted, validated, analysed, aggregated and disseminated.
- (ii) Member States often take measures to ensure the confidentiality of certain flows of goods. Therefore special data treatment in confidential environment is required to calculate the correct European Union and euro area aggregates while ensuring proper application of confidentiality principles.
- (iii) The entire trade statistics production chain from A to Z, i.e. starting from data reception up to dissemination and user support is managed by one production unit what imposes high demands on staff specialisation.

This uniqueness of trade statistics production presumes the development and management of complex customised IT products (e.g. online COMEXT database with more than 100 000 extractions per month), high level of expertise in statistical methods and techniques (e.g. seasonal adjustment, calculation of indices), huge analytical capacity and appropriate interpretation of findings (e.g. mirror outlier detection), regular contacts with users (including ECB), preparation of customised data queries requiring rapid response (Parliamentary questions), etc.

Ongoing improvement and development of common web-based IT tools (e.g. CN-search, XT-NET Assist for user support), automation of production processes, harmonisation of methods and validation rules between Eurostat and Member States, reduction of statistical burden, changes in the customs clearance data collection and transmission systems and preparation of quality standards represent top priorities for present and near future of trade statistics.