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STATISTICS AND DATA DIRECTORATE
COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS AND STATISTICAL POLICY

Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Services Statistics

Summary record of the Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Services Statistics

18-20 November 2020

This document presents the summary record of the 12th meeting (held virtually on Zoom) of the Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Services Statistics (WPTGS, 18-20 November 2020).

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Wednesday 18 November 2020

1. Welcome and opening

Item 1.a. Welcome and opening, Paul Farello, WPTGS Chair, US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

Paul Farello, WPTGS Chair, (US Bureau of Economic Analysis [BEA]) welcomed delegates. He noted that while the pandemic has changed how we work, it has not changed the importance of the official statistics in helping users to make informed decisions. In fact, in these new times, official international trade statistics are even more important and needed, and this is reflected in the WPTGS 2020 agenda for the next three days.

Item 1.b. Welcome address, Paul Schreyer, OECD Chief Statistician

Paul Schreyer, OECD Chief Statistician reiterated the Chair's welcome to all delegates. He noted that an advantage of a virtual meeting is the ability for more delegates to join and actively participate in proceedings and he looked forward to this happening at the WPTGS 2020 meeting. The OECD Chief Statistician noted the meeting agenda aligned well with the OECD Secretary General and OECD Council's latest vision on moving forward after the pandemic, namely rebuilding with resilience and sustainability, and with a strong focus on measurement (and evidence).

The OECD Statistics and Data Directorate has already started to meet the new needs as set out by the OECD Council, for example increasing the frequency of collection and dissemination of granular international trade statistics which feed directly into policy briefs by other OECD Directorates. Mr Schreyer flagged the ongoing update to the balance of payments manual as being very important to WPTGS and a need for this Working Party to ensure its involvement and input. In particular, as the WPTGS has been at the cutting edge of measuring globalisation and digitalisation in the external accounts, it has a clear knowledge of the issues and challenges surrounding such measurement. The OECD Chief Statistician finally wished delegates a productive meeting, and is very much looking forward to hearing about the discussions.

Item 1.c. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 WPTGS meeting and Item 1.d. Adoption of the agenda of the 2020 WPTGS meeting

The summary record for the 2019 WPTGS meeting was approved, as was the adoption of the agenda of the 2020 WPTGS meeting.

2. Digital Trade

Item 2.a. Survey on “Template for Reporting Digital Trade” Rodolfo Ostolaza, OECD

[Presentation](#)

The first presentation of the 2020 meeting was by Rodolfo Ostolaza (OECD). The ‘Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade – OECD/WTO/IMF’ was published in December 2019, and as was noted at the time, should be considered a ‘living document’ – the expectation is that it will be updated during 2022 – and for example, the US BEA has already provided welcome comments and feedback. The presentation focused on encouraging countries to complete the “Template for reporting digital trade (simplified)”, and provide updates to the Handbook based on their experiences.

A number of delegates (e.g. Canada, Spain, the United States) outlined work undertaken on measuring digital trade in which the Handbook provided an important resource, while others outlined future plans. To the question related to areas in the template that countries should concentrate on first in measuring digital trade, the OECD answered that countries should attempt to focus first on the standard components in the templates, and complement the addendum items where currently available (e.g. digital services, ICT goods, etc.). Finally, the OECD noted that there are a lot of groups working on digitalisation and consistency is a question. With terminology converging, the OECD sees countries starting the compilation of digital services as bringing about further consistency.

Item 2.b. Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, Stephanie Studds, US Census Bureau

[Presentation](#)

Direct and Indirect Measures of the Economic Impact of the Digital Economy was presented next by Stephanie Studds (US Census Bureau). The analysis seeks to leverage existing data to identify sectors affected by the digital economy, to develop forward-looking uses of big data to measure the digital economy and measure the ever-changing technology needs of businesses.

Outcomes from the research allowed measurement of AI, Robotics, ecommerce, and their impact on the economy. It was possible to identify good ways to measure the digital economy and technology use by businesses. The investigation also allowed the US Census Bureau to explore and deploy this technology within the organisation to better achieve automation and quality data.

Delegates appreciated the cutting-edge statistical work being undertaken by the US Census Bureau and raised questions around prices, productivity, cross-border transactions, trade by enterprise characteristics and use of the Handbook.

The US Census Bureau does have several efforts underway to link trading and non-trading firms over time to understand various characteristics including employment, productivity, and other performance and growth characteristics. Ms Studds also noted that the US Census Bureau had seen clear cases where enterprises that had invested in new technology, for example AI, were seeing higher levels of productivity. She also outlined that this work stream had in large parts been based on recommendations in the Handbook.

Item 2.c. Canada's Services Exports through the Lens of Digital Trade, Diana Wyman, Statistics Canada

[Presentation](#)

Diana Wyman (Statistics Canada) gave the final presentation in the session on digital trade. Statistics Canada has already progressed significantly in measuring digital trade, for example with ICT international trade in services statistics and modes of supply (excluding Mode 3) using the simplified allocation method.

Work is in progress and next steps involve delineating digitally ordered from digitally delivered services (this work will be published in December 2020); identifying digital intermediary platforms; and delineating domestic sales and exports for Mode 3.

Delegates were impressed with the work that Statistics Canada had done to date, and eager to follow the future work. There was discussion around the level of detail collected from respondents (and how the respondent population was established), ratios used for education services, and finally where the unit responsible for estimating digital statistics is located.

Within Statistics Canada digital trade units are embedded in most divisions, for example national accounts, international accounts, and these work with the statisticians to help bring about the digital statistics.

3. Large Case Units (LCUs)

Item 3.a. OECD Developments and the Mexican Use Case, Graham Pilgrim, OECD; Gerardo Durand, INEGI-Mexico

[Presentation](#)

[Presentation](#)

The next session started with a joint presentation from the OECD and INEGI-Mexico. The Chair asked delegates to consider their ability to collaborate with the OECD ADIMA (Analytical Database on Individual Multinationals and their Affiliates) team, looking for example at intra- and extra-MNE trade links between MNEs.

Graham Pilgrim (OECD) opened the session with a short update on ADIMA. He noted that the full 2019 year for the 500 MNEs database will be released on 16 November 2020 ([oe.cd/ADIMA](https://www.oecd.org/adima/)), containing over 130,000 affiliates and 60,000 websites belonging to 500 MNEs. This release sees improvements in coverage of business reference numbers (OpenCorporates) and Monitoring systems (GDELT: Articles classified by Google NLP tools). ADIMA now includes a Gender Diversity Extension that focuses on the energy sector (done in collaboration with the International Energy Agency [IEA]): <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/what-big-data-can-tell-us-about-women-on-boards.htm>

Next steps include the development of Data Dashboard, ongoing collaboration with UNSD to operationalise the “Global Group Register” and the investigation of a move to real-time updates. Collaborating with NSOs to include new data sources and improve validation is a major focus, and the case study with INEGI has been a success story.

Gerardo Durand (INEGI-Mexico) next presented on the joint project to use ADIMA to help validate INEGI data. Mr Durand outlined that the goal of the project was to: analyse the main characteristics of multinational affiliates in Mexico where there are differences between INEGI and ADIMA and use this information to keep INEGI’s Statistical Business Register better updated. A case study for the multinational Siemens AG highlighted how the use of additional data from ADIMA led directly to the identification of 81 additional affiliates.

Delegates were impressed with ongoing improvements to ADIMA and how the OECD and INEGI worked together to leverage data to improve the national statistical business register. Delegates were also interested to know more about work with other international data sources, for example the European Group Register (EGR) and a unique identifier, matching techniques, variable coverage and issues with confidentiality (in particular INEGI sharing data).

The OECD replied that they in contact with the EGR team, and provide data. Unfortunately, the EGR is only available to members of the European Statistical System. ADIMA attempts to remain flexible and includes a number of IDs including the business register number, LEI and PermID. The ideal would be that every firm had a unique global ID (such as an LEI), but that seems a long way away. INEGI replied that certainly there are confidentiality restrictions around Economic Census data that requires aggregated results provided at the 6-digit level of NAICS. One of the next steps is evaluating if the microdata laboratory at INEGI could give the possibility of providing more granular data for investigation.

Item 3.b. The Large Case Unit in Statistics Norway – Tasks and Experiences, Trude Nygård Evensen, Statistics Norway

[Presentation](#)

Trude Nygård Evensen of Statistics Norway noted that the Statistics Norway LCU was established in early 2018 and currently consists of six statisticians. The aim of the unit is to improve the quality of economic statistics generated from MNEs, and this is undertaken through a number of processes, mostly involving confronting microdata for MNEs across surveys. Work to date has generated a number of common themes

causing inconsistencies, namely: processing/merchanted, time of recording, overseas affiliates, statistical value (FOB) versus transaction data, and missing or misreported data. These are all issues that WPTGS has touched or worked on over the years.

Delegates appreciated the practical presentation from Statistics Norway, with a number of countries offering advice to Statistics Norway based on their experiences. The United States asked if Norway had compared the consistency of the reported purchase of manufacturing services with trade in goods data for simple cases of roundtrip trade (i.e. intermediate goods leaving Norway for processing, going to country X for processing, and final goods coming back to Norway). Belgium questioned why is the LCU limited to non-financial MNEs as the whole picture might be needed to understand some inconsistencies or large transactions. Germany noted that they found that some enterprises declare received/paid fees for manufacturing services as sales/purchases of goods in the VAT declaration. This leads to higher values in the VAT declarations compared to IMTS.

Norway replied that LCU work is currently limited to non-financial MNEs because of resources. Ms Nygård Evensen also noted that Norway is a small country, so issues such as roundtripping either don't apply or are very small. They thanked the other countries for their valuable insights into this work.

Item 3.c. Full Direct Reporting By Large Companies in the Balance of Payments: The French Experience, Patrick Branthomme, Banque de France

[Presentation](#)

Patrick Branthomme from Banque de France presented the Banque de France's ongoing process to move away from an International Trade Reporting System (ITRS) and towards full direct reporting, the latest step coming in 2007 with a law making it mandatory for the largest French companies to report to the Banque. On a quarterly basis, over 600 of the largest French companies report directly to Banque on France, with a dedicated LCU in the Banque responsible for contact with the 600 companies. The reporting covers a number of balance of payments components, including for example merchanted, services, income and FDI.

Each large company reporting on such a range of transactions results in greater completeness, and having regular contact allows issues and questions to be resolved quickly and efficiently.

Delegates thanked Mr Branthomme for the enlightening presentation, agreeing that good communication with respondents is crucial. Questions were asked about whether Banque de France coordinates with the LCU of the French Statistics Office (INSEE) and for more details about the use of supplementary data sources for components such as transport and goods not covered by Customs.

Banque de France replied that while they have a lot of contact with INSEE, they are still working towards full coordination. They noted that small and medium sized companies provide data through a range of additional surveys and at present, they have no specific way of identifying goods not covered by Customs.

4. Prices and Quantities

Item 4.a. A Harmonised Methodology for Outlier Detection and Missing Values in IMTS, Dominique Habimana, FAO; Christophe Durand, International Trade Centre; Markie Muryawan, UNSD

[Presentation](#)

This presentation gave an update of the on-going joint initiative of FAO, ITC and UNSD. The research goal is to modify the existing UNSD methodology in identifying outliers, put in place at least 15 years ago and now potentially not suitable given the change in data infrastructure and significant improvement in the data itself over this time.

Outlined was the project background, including the existing methodologies used by the four agencies with suggestions to use a combined approach. Numeric examples illustrated the ITC outlier detection method (time series, observations of a unique reporter-partner pair and of a given HS 6-digit product). The ITC

has decided to adopt OECD's approach of outlier detection using Asymmetry Fence Method (AFM) to complement its method. The AFM method for outlier detection relies on a much larger data sample and thus it requires pulling all observations of a group of reporters and partners that trade the same products together.

The OECD is very supportive of this joint initiative and pointed out that its method is developed with the final goal of estimating unit value indices (UVI) comparable to National Accounts (as inputs into TiVA initiatives). It is noteworthy that there are advantages and disadvantages for each methodology used by each agency. Collectively, the expert group is still testing the current combined methodology.

Delegates thanked the international organisations for their joint work and applauded them for working together in an attempt to establish a single approach. Specific questions were asked around the timeframe and if UNSD plans to implement the recommendations from this joint study and undertake a consultation process with countries (at least for some countries) before implementing such an outlier detection/imputation processes.

The FAO noted that regarding the ambiguity of some detected outliers, the group will consult the concerned countries and get feedback. The plan of this joint trade methodological work is in 2 phases: first is to finalise the improved/harmonised method for outlier detection by early 2021, and second is to focus on missing quantity estimation and complete it during the same year. Then UNSD will implement the final and agreed method at the UN COMTRADE level.

Item 4.b. Development of a Transport Cost Database for International Trade, Onno Hoffmeister, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

[Presentation](#)

Next, Onno Hoffmeister from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) gave the last presentation of the day. UNCTAD's project was motivated by International Maritime Organisation strategy for the reduction of GHG emissions from maritime transportation. As an impact assessment, UNCTAD and the World Bank's joint research programme aim to release the estimates of several derived indicators, such as transport cost, freight rate, unit freight rate, and a further breakdown of these indicators by mode of transport – including sea, road, air, rail and other. The project began in December 2019 and data will be released in December 2020 by UNCTAD. The initial assessment focuses on 2016 data only.

Delegates were impressed with this significant piece of work in manipulating a large and varied range of series and valuations. Doing such statistical work raises a number of complex questions around comparability, and delegates were eager for UNCTAD to provide more details on the actual details behind how the estimates were made. UNCTAD noted that a website has been created outlining in detail the methodology, and encouraged delegates to visit it: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/TransportCost.html>. UNCTAD is unsure as to when and if 2017 will be made available as the whole process is resource intensive.

DAY 2 – Thursday 19 November 2020

5. Globalisation/Asymmetries

Item 5.a. United States Work Related to Trade Re-exporters, Stephanie Studds, US Census Bureau

[Presentation](#)

The second day of the WPTGS 2020 meeting began with a session on globalisation and international bilateral trade asymmetries. First up, Stephanie Studds from the US Census Bureau presented work on re-exporters undertaken by the United States Census Bureau. The presentation started by looking at ways to calculate “value-added prior to re-export”, and the “country of origin for re-export”. Common commodities where this is important include: polished gems, pharmaceuticals repacked, sorted electronics and the refurbishing of automobiles. While there is no legislation in the United States requiring the collection of this data (i.e. making it compulsory for companies to provide it to the US Census Bureau), the majority of organisations are able to provide this information relatively efficiently.

Delegates thanked Ms Studds for the interesting presentation. During the discussion, questions were asked about whether it is possible to match imports of re-exporters with their re-exports by looking at the Customs records and when this data will be made available.

Ms Studds noted that the US Census Bureau have attempted to measure imports of re-exporters with their re-exports by looking at the Customs records and this work is ongoing. They hope to release the new data in February 2021, and develop further after the initial implementation. The OECD thanked the US Census Bureau for the very important work, especially, as the Chair mentioned, for TiVA. It noted that handling charges are an important aspect of GVCs and can be an important source of income, and the work of the US Census Bureau allows everyone to gain a better understanding.

Item 5.b. OECD/WTO Update of the Balanced International Trade in Services Database (BaTiS), Antonella Liberatore, OECD

[Presentation](#)

Antonella Liberatore (OECD) presented key findings from the project:

- First release of BaTiS in 2017 in BPM5 (190 economies, 1995-2012, 11 service items);
- Update to BPM6 (202 economies, 2005-2019, 12 service items) with publication due at end of 2020;
- Total services bilateral availability has improved (2005: 32% vs 2018: 66%), varies on industry (construction and government services still low);
- OECD/WTO have adopted a common balancing methodology in co-operation with Eurostat-Figaro team;
- Next steps include possibility of biannual updates, more detailed sectoral breakdowns and a possible mode of supply dimension.

Given the nature of the joint work, the WTO started the discussion, firstly by thanking the OECD for the good cooperation. It noted the importance of asymmetries and for many years the international statistics community was unable to produce balanced data points, however there is still much work to do. Finally it

noted the difficulty in adding a modes of supply dimension and the large number of additional data points that would be needed to undertake such work.

The Chair then opened the floor for discussion; Hungary wanted to know about the "invisible trade" in Bermuda and if it is real production or SPEs, and the Netherlands asked if the "quality index" is decreasing through time and if the use of gravity models as a share of data points is changing over time.

The OECD responded that in regards to Bermuda it is hard to determine (there are suspicions), but most likely the trade is by foreign owned MNEs (Bermuda excludes foreign owned MNEs from their sample) in the financial and insurance sectors but they do not have further information and so it out of scope for BaTiS. The use of estimations in BaTiS are in fact decreasing over time as data availability is increasing.

Item 5.c. Improvements to US Travel and Transport Statistics and Impact on Bilateral Asymmetries, Alexis Grimm, US BEA

[Presentation](#)

Alexis Grimm (US BEA) presented on improvements to travel and transport estimates for the United States. Key findings were:

- Previously for travel estimates the BEA used number of travellers multiplied by an average expenditure per traveller. This methodology has been kept roughly the same, but refined to better estimate *education* and *healthcare* related travellers.
- To estimate *education* related travel services, the BEA has started using expenditure microdata on foreign students in the United States.
- *Health* related travel is now a function of health related travellers and their average expenditure, the estimates need smoothing as data is quite sparse.
- The United States has now moved to all EBOPS 2010 recommended categories of travel.
- In investigating new estimates for air passenger transport the BEA now uses flight level data as there were issues with ultimate origin of flight data.
- A very positive outcome was the resolving of all major coverage issues, the BEA will continue working on the small travel asymmetries that remain.

A number of countries thanked the BEA for the very nice presentation and were impressed with the clear and detailed work done by the BEA to improve their transport and travel estimations. The IMF further noted that travel is an important component for many countries and they had noticed recent increases in global discrepancies in the IMF BOP Yearbook (BOPSY) for services that are now approaching the levels seen in goods. One reason may be increased difficulties in data collection and also different methods used by countries so they were very encouraged to see the improvements undertaken by the BEA.

A number of other countries (Germany and Ireland), congratulated the BEA on its work and stated that they would be pleased to receive and work with the updated bilateral data. It was noted that 2020 will see huge changes in travel data due to pandemic and this is something countries will have to work through. Finally, Eurostat referenced their recently published "Handbook on the compilation of statistics on sea and air transport in national accounts and balance of payments — 2020 edition" for information to statisticians.

6. Balance of Payments Manual Update

Item 6.a. Balance of Payments Manual update progress, Silvia Matei, IMF

[Presentation](#)

The IMF has launched the [update](#) of the sixth edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6) targeting to publish an updated version of the Manual (BPM7) by March 2025. The BPM6 update is being coordinated with the update of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA), also with a target release date of March 2025.

Key elements of the BPM6 Update process and the timetable were endorsed by the IMF's Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics (BOPCOM) at its Thirty-Third Meeting in March 2020. The two phases of the update process are:

- Phase I (March 2020–March 2022): finalisation of the detailed research on the issues identified in the Compendium of Research Issues and discuss how they would impact the new version of the Manual (BPM7); and
- Phase II (April 2022–March 2025): finalisation of the Annotated Outline and drafting of the chapters/appendixes of the BPM7, and extensive consultations about the proposed changes.

Task Teams (TTs) were established to advise BOPCOM and the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) on research issues relevant to the BPM6 and the 2008 SNA Update. Silvia covered the TTs relevant to WPTGS, namely the Balance of Payments Task Team (BPTT) and the Current Account Task Team (CATT) and the Guidance Notes (GNs) associated with each subject. Silvia invited members of the WPTGS to share their views on:

- The coverage of topics in the CATT GNs;
- Preferences for informing the group on the review of the next CATT GNs, i.e., at the time of public consultation or earlier in the process;
- Interest in participating in the feasibility testing for: Valuation of imports and exports of goods in the international standards (CIF to FOB adjustment).

The Chair opened the discussion by noting the importance of this work for everyone at the meeting and to investigate the IMF website on this work for full details. For example, the task teams on globalisation, direct investment and financial investment would all benefit WPTGS delegate feedback.

Overall WPTGS delegates expressed interest that the IMF keep them updated and informed of ongoing work on relevant guidance notes, if possible earlier in the process than the public consultations.

Item 6.b. Ireland's Work on CIF to FOB, Patrick Quill, Central Statistics Office (CSO) of Ireland

[Presentation](#)

Patrick Quill from the CSO of Ireland provided a timely presentation following on from the IMF's update of the balance of payments manual work and an important topic in that update, namely the changes proposed to the CIF/FOB adjustment. The presentation focused on recent work carried out by the CSO. This highlighted that the CIF/FOB treatment does not reflect economic reality with the quality of the adjustment uncertain. The CSO found evidence that the correct treatment of statistical value is not fully applied and further still, the CIF/FOB adjustment is poorly suited to merchanting with further conceptual and practical issues. They noted that invoice values are available in the source international merchandise trade statistics, and that for the CSO, there is an opportunity to change and use data based on transactions (building trade statistics that reflect the real world).

Such an interesting conceptual presentation generated a lot of comment and observations from delegates. Norway noted that they have undertaken work with similar findings, while a number of other countries worried about what happens when the invoice value is not available and issues around collecting product breakdowns.

Mr Quill replied that he understood these issues and there was still a lot to work out before implantation could take place. However, he reiterated that the current CIF/FOB adjustment does not reflect economic reality and therefore as balance of payment compilers we should improve the methodology.

Item 6.c. Valuation of Imports and Exports of Goods in the International Standards - Data availability and quality: An analysis of German import and export data, Jens Walter, Deutsche Bundesbank

[Presentation](#)

The following presentation from Jens Walters of the Deutsche Bundesbank carried on the topic covered by the CSO of Ireland and the move away from the CIF/FOB adjustment to the transaction value. After investigating the issue, the Bundesbank reached a number of conclusions

- In the European Customs Union the invoice value is in principle available from the Customs documentation;
- For Extra-trade, assumptions can be verified with Customs data, concluding that the declared invoice is of reasonable quality;
- For Intra-trade, the findings suggest that companies often declare the invoice values also as statistical values. However, the quality of the invoice values seems reasonable;
- The overall effect of a possible changeover in the balance of payments goods account from an initial investigation seems to suggest that there will not be large changes, with Extra-imports being mostly effected.

Delegates welcomed the presentation and were pleased that the Bundesbank was carrying on this important work, particularly given its importance with the BPM6 update. Denmark noted that if invoice value is not available, it is not possible to reroute services as suggested by the BPM6, if the delivery terms are not FOB or CIF, and the two last presentations showed that the delivery terms for imports was more likely not to be of the CIF value. In other words: invoice value is already needed in order to apply the correct freight services, so a change to a transaction based value would actually reduce the needed information (no need for CIF/FOB values, only invoice values).

Mr Walter, in replying to UNSD, emphasised that any change will need full consultation with international trade statisticians and there may be a need to request invoice value as part of the customs data. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the invoice value is conceptually the correct value, and the CIF/FOB adjustment currently taking place is not conceptually correct.

Item 6.d. The Biotech Sector in IPP – the Challenges of Recording Transactions, Kim Janssens, National Bank of Belgium

[Presentation](#)

The National Bank of Belgium, after seeing extensive media coverage on a collaboration agreement between a Belgian enterprise and an extra-EU biotech enterprise needed to investigate the impact on the balance of payments, and the presentation provided the case study. After investigating the transaction, the Bank decided on a balance of payments recording method. The collaboration agreement is understood as a partnership between the two enterprises in which payment is made for the services to be provided during the cooperation. The transaction treated as an export of R&D services and not as an investment since no assets or patents were transferred. Some questions remained: who is the economic owner of the underlying IPP; and is there R&D services or charges for the use of intellectual property.

The delegates were impressed with the work undertaken by the National Bank of Belgium, and the complexities of the case are relevant to international work being undertaken, for example, the IPP work in the BPM6 update. Questions were asked around how the Bank communicated the transaction to users, and how the Bank monitors the situation.

Ms Janssens replied that Bank has a team keeping up with the media to spot large transactions. As there is a 6 week lag between a reference month and the monthly publication, the first thing the Bank does is to contact the reporters in order to check the correctness of the information and ask them to complete their

declarations. In communicating with users, the Bank only uses information that is already in the public sphere (for example, in the media).

Item 6.e. Ireland, Ongoing work on IPPs, Oisín Mangan, Central Statistics Office of Ireland

[Presentation](#)

With Ireland seeing the impacts of globalisation on economic statistics directly, the CSO has needed to ensure consistency between national accounts and balance of payments. The presentation covered work undertaken, and some inconsistencies uncovered, namely:

- In the measurement of the depreciation of IPP (R&D assets); and
- In the recording of expenditure on R&D services.

These differences in methodology between national accounts and balance of payments have the potential to affect the measurement of the factor flows and consequently GNI. CSO findings suggest it is necessary to adjust the balance of payments data related to IPP (R&D assets) and R&D services to ensure consistency with national accounting methodology.

In understanding the possibility of inconsistencies in the data, the CSO underlined the need to focus on data collection (and involve the large cases unit early on); the requirement for ongoing monitoring of treatment of R&D in both accounting frameworks; and, the necessity to ensure consistency of R&D related data across the two frameworks so that factor flows are based on national accounting rules.

Delegates took note of the presentation and the strong work undertaken by the CSO of Ireland, noting that they could implement the conclusions in their own workflows.

DAY 3 – Friday 20 November 2020

7. International Trade in Services Statistics and Modes of Supply

12:00 – 13:15

Item 7.a. Update on the Modes of Supply Compilers' Guide, George Papadopoulos, Eurostat

[Presentation](#)

Eurostat outlined how the recent “European Business Statistics (EBS) Regulation” has resulted in two new data collections: Trade in services by enterprise characteristics (STEC); and, International Supply of Services (ISS) by Mode of Supply. The accompanying “General implementing act (GIA) of the EBS Regulation - Commission Implementing Regulation 2020/1197” defines the data requirements. Given these new data requirements, Eurostat with EU Member States, the OECD, WTO, UNSD, DG Trade and the US BEA have started to work on a *Modes of Supply Compilers Guide* (the first task force meeting being held 11-12 November). The roadmap foresees the final text being ready September 2021 and the first edition published in December 2021.

Eurostat asked where delegates have examples of complex cases where they struggle to identify the mode(s) of supply involved in a transaction, or if they have examples of cases where a service is delivered/supplied via a mode which is outside the MSITS (e.g. legal or computer services supplied via Mode 2, maintenance services supplied via Mode 1) they contact the Eurostat task force.

The Chair welcomed the initiative from Eurostat, this will be a big help to compilers tackling a complex and new topic and help to iron out the thornier issues in the longer term. The Chair outlined the BEA's next plans:

- Prepare updated modes of supply statistics with the revised international trade in services estimates, with possible improvements to certain aspects of the methodology;
- When available, evaluate and incorporate responses to the financial services survey questions on the percentage of services performed remotely; and
- Continue to develop a bridge between the industry of sales in the AMNE statistics and the EBOPS 2010 categories, with the goal to present mode 3 transactions on the same basis as modes 1, 2, and 4, i.e., by product.

The United Kingdom asked if the Guide will include any details on how to estimate mode 5 (services in manufacturing). Eurostat replied that at the moment only the modes defined in the regulation (1 to 4) will be included and additionally noted that mode 5 can be estimated in Eurostat's forthcoming FIGARO's inter-country input-output tables release.

Item 7.b. Outward Foreign Affiliates in ABS Trade Project, Michael Abbondante, Australian Bureau of Statistics

[Presentation](#)

In the next presentation, Michael Abbondante, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) outlined the ABS's Australian Outward Foreign Affiliates Trade (AOFAT) survey, giving an overview of user needs, strategy for innovation and efficiency, the collection strategy and key learnings. He then presented some selected results and user reactions and how the results added to the ABS International Economic Statistics Strategy. For WPTGS delegates the key learnings provided some valuable insights for their own work, these included the need to have low intrusion with high collaboration, ensuring co-operation with government partners (including having valuable complementary statistical releases) and supplying data

insights to users. Two data insights relevant here were that Australia top investment destinations and industries have been consistent over time and foreign investors view Australia as a base for regional operations.

Delegates were impressed with the new initiative and work undertaken by the ABS and the resulting data insights. A number of delegates asked how the ABS managed to survey overseas affiliates given the legal issues around this, and in particular the issue of getting their export/import data.

Mr Abbondante replied that the ABS, like most national statistics offices, cannot directly survey enterprises in other countries. Therefore, they had to work with the Australian parent to receive the overseas affiliate's data. In regards to exports/imports data, the ABS found that this was a very hard variable for survey respondents to provide and something they will work on in future work.

Item 7.c. Latest Work on Modes of Supply, Dean Scott, Office for National Statistics (ONS) United Kingdom

[Presentation](#)

The final presentation of the session from the ONS, in following up on the Eurostat work, provided an update of the ONS new work on modes of supply. Phase 1 of the ONS work looked at estimating modes 1, 2 and 4. This work, mostly complete now, after an initial feasibility study and data collection, revealed for example that Mode 1 makes up 67% of total United Kingdom services exports to the world in 2018. Phase 2 will look at the robustness of the estimates and investigate new imputation methods and the ability to improve data collection. The final phase (3) will see the ONS estimate Mode 3, work is well underway, starting with the transformation of the FDI survey which will require a sample size and survey instrument expansion. This work is expected to be published in late 2020.

Delegates thanked the ONS for outlining their work on estimating modes of supply that has provided everyone with a clear framework of how this work can be done and the clear demand that such statistics can generate. The OECD asked that besides the changes in data collection instruments, what other challenges were found and solved, while Germany asked if the ONS had ever thought about using inward FATS data from partner countries to fill data gaps.

The ONS replied that response burden was a big challenge, for example enterprises indicated that they could provide Mode 1 data without too much issue, but asking these questions would increase the size of the questionnaire. This forced the ONS to carefully consider any changes to the questionnaire while the increase in the sample size has resulted in additional strain on the ONS's collect unit. In response to the German question, the ONS stated that they their initial plan was to use inwards FATS data and they undertook investigation into this. However, the pandemic related confinement timing led to businesses closing up shop and response rates falling. The future plan is use this data once businesses return to some sense of normality.

8. COVID-19 and International Trade Statistics

Session 8 provided an opportunity for a sharing of statistical experiences in the face of COVID-19. The pandemic has changed compilation working methods for international trade statistics, with a number of statistics offices now working fully remotely. Furthermore, the international trade statistics community has seen a demand for data to analyse the impacts of the pandemic, including the demand for higher frequency and more timely information, which has resulted in a number of use cases for new experimental data sources and methods.

Session 8 was to allow for countries to provide a brief overview of new developments and provide insights to the Working Party, discussion was limited to allow all presentations in the time allocated.

Item 8.a. Recent Developments in High-frequency Economic Indicators and their Potential Use during the Pandemic, Denis Caron, Statistics Canada

[Presentation](#)

Development included:

- Development of a COVID-19 portal for statistics including the introduction of flash monthly estimates for key indicators;
- Extending the Annual Trade in Goods by Exporter Characteristics statistics to consider a monthly time period;
- Development of specific indicators for Trade in Medical and Protective Goods; and
- Use of new data sources such as Airport Statistics (e.g. Primary Inspection Kiosks) to better reflect travel activities.

Item 8.b. COVID-19 Shock – Outcome on the Portuguese Compilation of BOP/IIP Data, Paulo David, Banco de Portugal

[Presentation](#)

The compilation of Portuguese balance of payments is reliant on direct reporting by enterprises. There were some concerns that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there would be a reduction in reporting and there was a need to discover alternative and overlapping indicators which could make the production of this data more resilient. In the end, reporting was only slightly reduced and the internal balance of payments system is now providing resilience to the production of other data series.

Item 8.c. Effects of COVID-19 on International Trade, Peter Dolan, Statistics New Zealand

[Presentation](#)

Like many, New Zealand saw an increase in demand for international trade statistics, with Statistics New Zealand responding by releasing provisional daily data. Improvements were also made to the calculation of *travel* exports using electronic card data, and *education* exports by working closely with other government departments.

Item 8.d. Compilation of Trade in Goods Statistics in COVID-19 Times: National Critical Issues and Undertaken Actions, Maria Serena Causo, ISTAT - Istituto Nazionale di Statistica

In Italy, traders were allowed to delay the submission of their declarations without incurring penalties. To counteract this, ISTAT and the Customs Agency began an awareness campaign to highlight the importance of these data submissions, and complemented this with direct telephone surveys and microdata.

Item 8.e. Banque de France, Experience in a time of COVID-19, Bertrand Pluyaud, Banque de France

[Presentation](#)

Banque de France reported similar issues with concerns over the ability of companies to report. In the case of failure to report the usual methodology was to apply the value of the previous year – however, it was likely that the failure to report was driven by the pandemic – and therefore using the yearly growth rate of the observed sample seemed more appropriate.

Item 8.f. Outcomes of the Eurostat COVID-19 Survey on EU Member States, Iliyana Savova, Eurostat[Presentation](#)

Eurostat presented the results of a survey – which highlighted that despite the challenges it was possible to overcome these. The most affected service categories and with the greatest measurement challenges were travel and transport.

This session highlighted the ability of the international trade statistics community to respond promptly to new situations and challenges. In the discussions there was the acknowledgement that COVID-19 had actually been beneficial (for the production of international trade statistics) with new methodologies considered, new data products developed and previous errors corrected (e.g. Belgium highlighted that without a travel shut down they would not have realised they were including an e-commerce component within their travel statistics.)

9. Overview and next WPTGS Meeting**Item 9.a. Overview of the WPTGS Meeting and Next Meeting**

Rodolfo Ostolaza (OECD) provided an overview of the meeting as a whole, he thanked all the presenters and hoped to see everyone physically at the 2021 meeting which will take place in the first week of October 2021.

Item 9.b. Election of Bureau Members

Tatiana Mosquera-Yon from Banque de France and Fabienne Fortanier from the Dutch National Bank both stood down from the Bureau. Bertrand Pluyaud from Banque de France was elected, and WPTGS delegates were informed that a bureau position currently remains unfilled and were encouraged to contact Secretariat to express interest.

Finally, the Chair thanked the interpreters, the Secretariat and all the delegates for making the 2020 WPTGS meeting the success it was.

Participants List for Virtual Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Services Statistics (WPTGS)

Liste des Participants pour Virtuel Groupe de travail sur les statistiques du commerce international des biens et des services (WPTGS)

18/11/2020 - 20/11/2020

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