

## **Purpose of the document**

This document presents a business case for the implementation of SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) in the domain of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS). It reflects the work carried out by a team of statisticians from International Organisations (Eurostat, the OECD, the ITC and UNCTAD, under the coordination of the UNSD) to develop common standards for the exchange of IMTS data.

The document is targeted at senior managers within national statistical agencies responsible for the production of official IMTS statistics. It is not a technical document, nor is it written primarily to inform technical staff.

## **Problem statement**

Eurostat, the OECD and the UNSD receive trade data from countries around the world. This data is then shared between the three organisations and with others (such as the FAO, IMF, UNCTAD and ITC). However, the framework for these data and the metadata behind them often differ from region to region making international comparisons difficult. These complexities are only resolved through time-consuming and resource draining actions.

As a result of these challenges, international organisations have been looking at the SDMX standard to harmonise IMTS data exchange through the use of uniform structures and common concept and code list definitions. In recent years, SDMX has been increasingly used to structure and exchange statistical data across a range of statistical domains, across a number of international organisations and in a number of countries. Flagship projects include the use of SDMX in the National Accounts domain to underpin the global implementation of SNA 2008. The launch of the SDMX Global Registry in April 2014 has further facilitated the implementation of projects involving several international organisations by providing a central reference point for all global SDMX objects. These developments indicate that SDMX is mature enough to support the harmonisation and international data exchange needs in the IMTS domain.

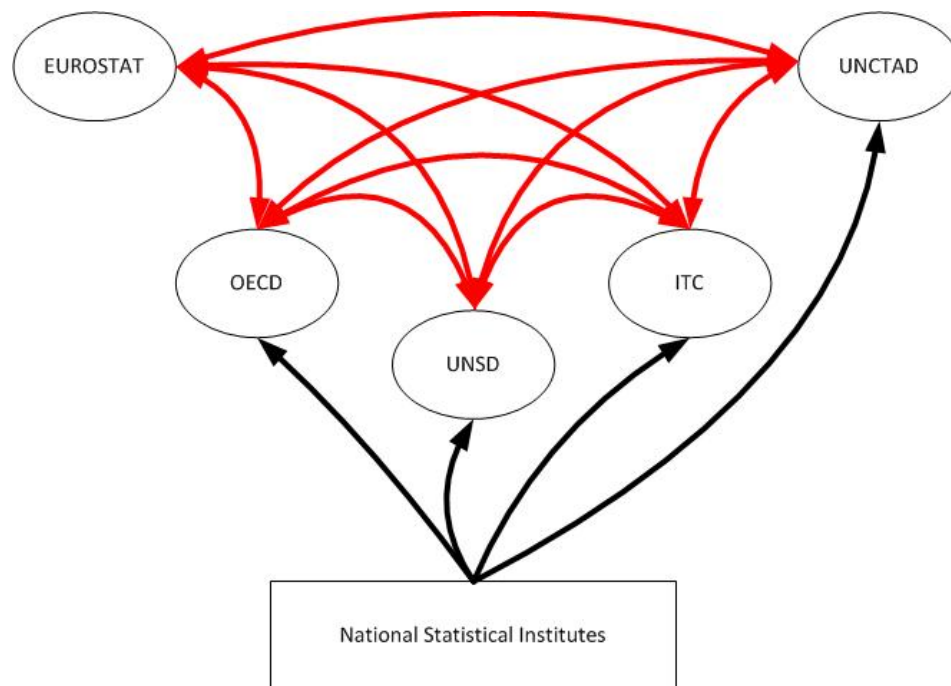
## **Objectives and scope**

The project aims at creating and implementing a global SDMX framework for IMTS data exchange among international organisations and IMTS data exchange between international organisations and participating national statistical offices.

The project covers all data flows among the involved international organisations and between the involved international organisations and national statistical offices. Given their

peculiarity, the data flows between Eurostat and EU Member States are not covered by this project.

The objective of the project is to develop a unified SDMX framework to describe the data flows currently in place. The project does not foresee the harmonisation of the IMTS data requirements of the various international organisations involved, nor does it imply a unification of the existing IMTS data collection processes. The project may however serve as a basis for further business process integration at international level in the future.



It should be emphasised that participation of national statistical offices in the implementation of SDMX for their data exchange with the involved international organisations is on a voluntary basis.

## Benefits

The project would increase the comparability of international trade data collected by the international organisations involved through the use of common structural metadata for their description. Users of the data would also benefit from the availability of a common, modern technical infrastructure for querying data from the public databases of the international organisations involved.

Participating Member States would benefit from a unified set of metadata artefacts describing the data to be transmitted to the various international organisations. This project therefore represents an opportunity for national statistical offices to standardise and streamline their dissemination of IMTS data to international organisations.

### **Current status and timeline**

The involved international organisations have already developed a draft SDMX framework for the international exchange of IMTS data.

| <b>Action</b>                           | <b>Actor</b>                   | <b>Date</b>    |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Global content review of SDMX artifacts | Invitation to all NSOs and IOs | May 2015       |
| Publication of revised version          | -                              | September 2015 |
| Global technical pilot                  | Invitation to all NSOs and IOs | Fall 2015      |