

Terms of reference (TOR)
Working group for the development of an
SDMX implementation framework for IMTS

Purpose and scope of work

1. *Development of a global Data Structure Definition and a global Metadata Structure Definition for IMTS.* The purpose of the Working Group is to develop a global Data Structure Definition (DSD) specifying a uniform structure and concept definitions for the transmission of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS), and to develop a Metadata Structure Definition (MSD) for the transmission of IMTS reference metadata.

2. *Adoption of global DSD and MSD for IMTS.* The resulting global DSD and MSD for IMTS (further referred to as SDMX structures) are expected to be adopted by all countries and international and regional organizations implementing the SDMX standard for the collection and/or dissemination of official IMTS data and metadata. However, the Working Group recognizes that certain code lists might need to be extended according to each organization's implementation needs (for instance, to allow for country-specific commodity codes beyond the 6-digit level, country-specific classification of modes of transport, etc.).

3. *Clarifications on the scope of work.*

- (a) The Working Group aims to specify common code lists for IMTS and discuss and agree on arrangements for their maintenance. Because of the need to extend some of the code lists for country-specific classifications, it is not expected that code lists will be treated as immutable by all data providers involved.
- (b) The Working Group will decide which reference metadata concepts should be in the scope of a global MSD for IMTS. However, when defining a global MSD for IMTS, the Working Group will thoroughly review and take into account already available SDMX reference metadata structures, such as the ones existing in Europe.
- (c) The decision to use a "push" versus a "pull" data transmission architecture is outside the scope of the work defined by this Terms of Reference.

Governance, structure and work arrangements

4. *Composition of the group and work arrangements.* The working group will consist of Eurostat, ITC, OECD, UNCTAD and UNSD in their capacity as primary collectors of IMTS and/or sponsors of SDMX. The working group will take its decisions in the spirit of consensus and cooperation. For major decisions regarding the development and maintenance of the SDMX structures for IMTS the full Task Force on IMTS, as well as the EG-IMTS will be informed and consulted, as appropriate. Also the SDMX secretariat will be informed and consulted on technical matters as appropriate. UNSD will act as secretariat and chair of the working group.

5. *Maintenance agency.* UNSD will be the maintenance agency (custodian) of the SDMX structures for IMTS. This includes the IMTS-specific concepts and codes lists, as well as the responsibility for maintaining, updating, versioning, and retiring the SDMX structures for IMTS.

6. *Focal points and composition of the working group.* Each participating organization is requested to nominate a focal point to facilitate communication. The working group will include statistical and technical experts on SDMX but also the heads of the unit responsible for the work on these SDMX structures for IMTS in their respective organization, all of which will participate as necessary and appropriate.

7. *Time frame.* The Working Group will identify the main milestones involved in developing a SDMX implementation framework for IMTS, and will provide a time frame for their completion.

8. *Organization and methods of work.* The Working Group will decide on its detailed work plan and organization of work (who is doing what and when), its communication and coordination with other groups and with countries, and its methods of work, also taking advantage of the experiences made in the development of SDMX frameworks for balance of payments and national accounts. The chair/secretariat will provide support and ensure the progress of work. The Working Group is expected to conduct most of its work through a web-based collaboration platform and the use of phone and web meetings; however, face-to-face meetings will be held as needed and subject to availability of resources.

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