



INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES

1949

Towards a Global Database on Trade in Services

Trade in Services has grown, year after year, in importance in the world economy. Consequently, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) grew more concerned about the adequate measurement of statistics of international trade in services (SITS). Only recently was SITS added as a separate field to the Trade Statistics Branch of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The principle objectives for UNSD in this area are (i) the establishment of a worldwide database on SITS, (ii) the creation of database of country practices in the compilation and dissemination of SITS and (iii) the further development of the methodology of SITS together with the other members of the Task Force of SITS.

1989

25th session

Recognition that **international trade in services** is of increased importance

Trade in Services Statistics history in a nutshell

Already in 1949, during its 4th session, UNSC discussed issues of Banking statistics, Insurance statistics and Distribution statistics. However, it was not until 1989, forty years later (during its 25th session), that UNSC explicitly recognized that international trade in services was a subject of increased importance to users and producers of statistics. Since then, things have accelerated. In 1994, at the request of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNSC approved the creation of an **Inter-agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Service** (TFSITS). The objective was to elaborate on the statistical requirements of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Convened by the OECD, TFSITS consists of members of Eurostat, IMF, UNCTAD, UNSD, World Tourism Organization, and World Trade Organization. In 2001, UNSC approved the **Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services** (prepared by TFSITS) as the international standard for SITS. In 2004, a **Technical Subgroup (TSG) on the Movement of Natural Persons - Mode 4** was established by UNSC, in response to the need for a statistical framework to measure the economic impact (on home and host countries) of the movement of natural persons. The TSG consists of experts from international organizations and national statistical offices. UNSD was Chair and Secretariat of the group.

1994

Special session

Proposal for and approval of an **Inter-agency Task Force in Service Statistics**, convened by OECD

The Manual on Statistics of Trade in Services



Until 2001, the work of TFSITS focused on the development of the manual, which sets out a statistical framework for the collection and dissemination of Trade in Services data, extending the statistical definition of international trade in services into new areas to reflect the four modes of trade in services as defined by GATS, namely cross border, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of natural persons. Also, MSITS provides a more detailed classification of services delivered through conventional trade between residents and non-residents than is contained in BPM5, includes a

treatment of local delivery of services through a foreign commercial presence and takes a first step towards linking these two systems.

2001

32th session

Approval of the **Manual prepared by the Task Force on International Trade in Services**, and commended the Task Force for its work



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The Inter-agency Task Force on Statistics on Trade in Services

As mentioned, UNSD is an active member of the TFSITS. Besides participating in regular meetings, UNSD maintains the TFSITS website (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/taskforce.htm>), and is the editor of the TFSITS newsletter (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/newsletter.htm>), which is issued twice a year.

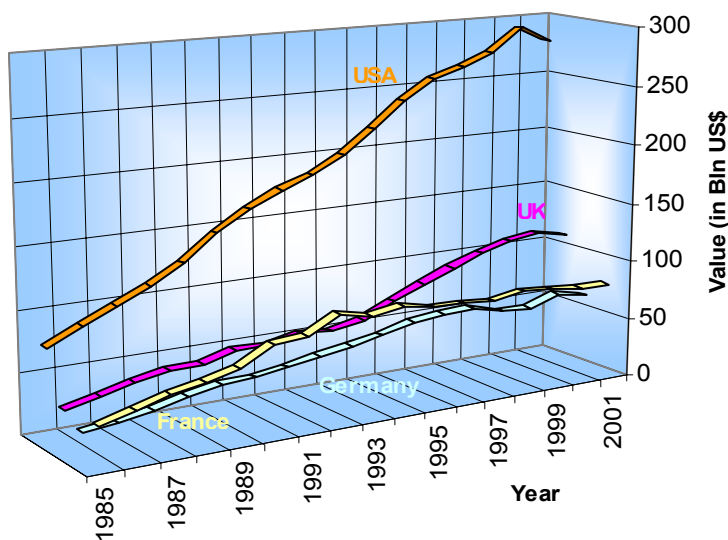


A Global Database on Trade in Services: UN ServiceTrade

In 2003, the TFSITS agreed that, as part of the implementation plan of the MSITS, UNSD, using its experience with the trade statistics database (UN COMTRADE) would create a database system which will be able to process, store and disseminate statistics of international trade in services in accordance with MSITS, including trade by service category (EBOPS classification) and partner country. This pilot version of the UN International Trade in Services database (UN ServiceTrade) is publicly available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/servicetrade> UN ServiceTrade contains EBOPS by partner data for about 35 countries covering the years 2000 to 2005.



Exports in Services (1985 - 2001)





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Data collection

In an effort to increase the availability of data in UN ServiceTrade, UNSD sent out a general request for SITS data at the end of 2006. The goal is to have as many countries as possible reporting their SITS data to UNSD, so that a fairly accurate picture of global trade in services can be given. On the basis of the available data we will then try to estimate missing data and estimate world imports and exports of services.

Working for and with the countries

UNSD undertakes **Technical cooperation** activities and assistance to countries through workshops and country projects in collaboration with other agencies. Examples of recently organized workshops on the compilation of trade in services statistics, in which UNSD was represented with one or more resource persons, are:

- Regional workshop for Western Asia countries in Beirut, Lebanon (2004) – Financed by ESCWA;
- Regional workshop for Central America and the Caribbean on Anguilla (July, 2005) – Financed by OAS and Canada;
- Regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama City, Panama (September, 2005) – Financed by UNSD;
- Regional workshop for Andean Community member states in Lima, Peru (July, 2006) – Financed by the European Commission.

More regional workshops are planned for 2007, namely:

- Regional workshop for Western Asia countries in Beirut, Lebanon (6-8 February, 2007) – Financed by ESCWA;
- Regional workshop for Africa in Tunis, Tunisia (16-20 April 2007) – Organized by IMF;
- Regional workshop for Commonwealth of Independent States in Kiev, Ukraine (September 2007) – Organized by UNSD.

What's next?

UNSD will actively participate in the work of the Task Force on SITS which focuses at present on:

- (1) Promotion of the implementation of the Manual through various means, including organization of workshops;
- (2) Development of compilation guidance documents;
- (3) Revision of the MSITS (to be completed by 2009); and
- (4) Creation of a knowledge base available on-line. Further development of UN ServiceTrade database and its metadata is necessary with a focus on quality and detail of data. As mentioned, workshops are currently under preparation and more technical cooperation will follow in the coming years.