

EXTERNAL TRADE STATISTICS - 2020

NATIONAL REFERENCE METADATA IN SINGLE INTEGRATED METADATA STRUCTURE (SIMS)

CONCEPT 1 – CONTACT

Sub-Concept 1.1: Contact organisation

National Statistics Office (NSO)

Sub-Concept 1.2: Contact organisation unit

International Trade Statistics Unit

Sub-Concept 1.3: Contact name

Mr. Joseph Galea

Sub-Concept 1.4: Contact person function

Head of Unit

Sub-Concept 1.5: Contact mail address

National Statistics Office (NSO),
Lascaris, Valletta VLT 2000, Malta.

Sub-Concept 1.6: Contact e-mail address

joseph.galea@gov.mt

Sub-Concept 1.7: Contact phone number

+356 2599 7164

CONCEPT 2 – METADATA UPDATE

Sub-Concept 2.1: Metadata last certified

11th February 2021.

Sub-Concept 2.2: Metadata last posted

3rd March 2021.

Sub-Concept 2.3: Metadata last update

3rd March 2021.

CONCEPT 3 – STATISTICAL PRESENTATION

Sub-Concept 3.1: Data description

International trade in goods statistics are an important data source for many public and private sector decision-makers. Trade data record the monthly trade in terms of arrivals and dispatches of goods as well as the monthly trade in terms of imports and exports. The statistical information is mainly provided by the traders on the basis of Customs (extra-EU) and Intrastat (intra-EU) declarations. Imports/Arrivals are valued on cost, insurance and freight (c.i.f.) basis. Total exports/Dispatches are valued on a free on board (f.o.b.) basis.

Monthly data, in millions of euro (€), for total exports/dispatches and total imports/arrivals, as well as breakdowns by major categories, are disseminated by the NSO.

The NSO also disseminates monthly direction of trade data with nine major regions, namely the European Union, European Free Trade Area, Other Europe, Africa, North and Central America, Caribbean and Bahamas Islands, South America, Asia, Australia and Oceania, and includes also Ships and Aircraft Stores.

Sub-Concept 3.2: Classification system

Product classifications:

The Combined Nomenclature is the goods classification used within the EU for the purposes of foreign trade statistics. It is also used by the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union for customs duty purposes. The classification is maintained by Eurostat for the statistical aspects and by the Taxation and Customs Union directorate for the tariff aspects.

The product classification codes are based on the Combined Nomenclature (CN) which is based on the World Customs Organization's Harmonized System Code (HS). Headings in the CN are identified by means of an eight-digit numerical code, the first six of which are in full agreement with the HS code. The very considerable numbers of subdivisions within the CN were introduced with the EU's specific customs and foreign trade statistics requirements in mind. The CN is revised annually and, as a Council Regulation, is binding on the Member States. It appears in all EU official languages.

Use of other nomenclatures include SDG (Section, Division and Group) which is part of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC Rev 3) as well as the United Nations Statistical Division's BEC code (Broad Economic Categories) for end-use classification and data dissemination purposes. Standard International Trade Classification (SITC Rev.3) is used for aggregated data dissemination and analytical purposes. This nomenclature is managed by the United Nations. A link is available from SITC Rev.3 and Rev. 4 to CN. SITC Rev. 3, which is a version still used by a number of countries for dissemination purposes.

Country and region classification:

The country nomenclature in use is the Geo-nomenclature (based on the ISO 3166 alpha - 2).

Sub-Concept 3.3: Sector coverage

System of Trade:

General Trade

The goods that are imported directly into, or exported directly from, the free circulation area plus goods that are imported into warehouses or re-exported from warehouses are included in the trade statistics as used for reporting and dissemination purposes.

Special Trade (relaxed definition)

Traditionally, special trade is differentiated by either using the 'strict' or the 'relaxed' definition. Malta follows the 'relaxed' definition, where the goods that cross the boundary of free circulation area as well as the goods that are imported, or exported after, for inward processing, are included. All transactions between foreign countries and customs-bounded warehouses and commercial free zones are excluded. Trade data sent monthly to Eurostat for both Intra and Extra data are in this format. Alternatively, under the strict definition of the special trade system, goods imported for inward processing and goods that enter or leave an industrial or commercial free zone or customs warehouses would not be recorded since they would not have been cleared through customs for home use.

Additionally, the following goods and transactions are excluded:

- Goods "in transit" or being "trans-shipped" (i.e. being moved from one ship to another);
- Personal and household effects, except those attracting duty;
- Fresh fish caught by Maltese fishing crafts;
- Goods sent or received by diplomatic missions in Malta;
- Repairs;
- Services;
- Monetary gold, legal tenders (e.g. securities, bank notes, coins in circulation);
- Advertising materials and commercial samples provided they are not subject to commercial transactions;
- Temporary transactions where no processing is planned or made, and the duration is no longer than 24 months; and
- Emergency aid for disaster areas.

These exclusions are generally in accordance with the international recommendations and therefore do not represent an exception.

The treatment of specific movements of goods are considered as follows:

- Repair of means of transport – not included;
- Supplies to own armed forces overseas – not included;
- Industrial plants – not included;
- Staggered consignments – not included;
- Bunker supplies – included;

- Ship's stores – included;
- Joint productions – not included;
- Postal consignment – included;
- Vessels and aircrafts – included;
- Deep sea fishery – not included;
- Motor vehicles and aircraft parts – included;
- Installations at sea – not included;
- Military goods – not included; and
- Petroleum products – included.

Sub-Concept 3.4: Statistical concepts and definitions

Detailed statistics on the trading in goods is collected and disseminated on a monthly basis. The trade value and the quantity are the basic indicators available for all products of the Combined Nomenclature.

The recommendations which are followed include:

- [UN International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions \(Series M, No 52, and Rev. 2\) 1998](#); and
- The updated version of the [IMTS 2010](#).

Two trade systems are defined by the manual:

- General Trade; and
- Special Trade.

The recommendations additionally define the principle of 'free circulation'. The latter refers to the status of the goods within the economic area which are free from duties and other taxes. Once goods have this status, they can circulate freely.

Sub-Concept 3.5: Statistical unit

Any natural and legal person lodging a customs declaration in Malta reports to the extra-EU trade statistics on the condition that the customs procedure is of statistical relevance. Within intra-EU trade statistics, any taxable person carrying out an intra-EU trade transaction is responsible for providing the information. An annual exemption threshold for the arrivals and dispatches of goods to and from Malta and the Member States of the European Union is established by the VAT authorities. Traders and enterprises whose value of annual gross merchandise arrivals and dispatches of goods to and from Malta, falls below this threshold, are exempted from providing supplementary information about their Intra-EU transactions. Traders and enterprises whose value of annual gross merchandise arrivals and dispatches of goods to and from Malta exceeds the said established threshold, must provide regular information about their transactions. Currently the Exemption Threshold for Malta is €700.

Sub-Concept 3.6: Statistical population

Trade in goods between Malta and its EU trading partners includes all goods which add or subtract from the stock of material resources of Malta by entering (imports) or leaving (exports) its economic territory, including goods for processing. Information on the goods is provided by a legal or a natural person.

Sub-Concept 3.7: Reference area

Since the accession to the EU on May 1, 2004 foreign trade statistics in Malta have consisted of Extra and Intra trade statistics covering both non-EU and EU trade respectively. Foreign trade statistics are inclusive of both these concepts and are presented as complete to users.

Up till the end of April 2004, Customs Declarations were the main source of all International Trade Statistics data. As from May 2004, the Customs Department has been collecting the basic data for non-EU Trade. At the end of each month, an electronic extraction of customs declarations covering non-EU movements of goods across the customs territory of the Maltese Islands is transferred to the NSO.

Intra-EU Trade data are collected by means of the Supplementary Declaration System. All transactions above the exemption threshold of €700 established by the VAT Department and covering arrivals and dispatches of goods between Malta and the other EU Member States are to be recorded.

Sub-Concept 3.8: Time coverage

Time series of trade data on a consistent basis for most aggregates are available electronically as from 1995. Data for earlier periods are available on paper publications.

Sub-Concept 3.9: Base period

The previous year is used as a base year for unit value indices calculations.

CONCEPT 4 – UNIT OF MEASURE

The value of trade is expressed in euro. As defined in the Combined Nomenclature, to measure the volume of trade, the net mass is expressed in kg and the quantity in supplementary unit (e.g. m, m², number of items).

CONCEPT 5 – REFERENCE PERIOD

The data for which the report refers is 2020. Intra-EU and Extra-EU trade data are compiled on a monthly basis. For extra-EU, the calendar month during which the customs declaration is accepted by the national authorities is considered as the reference period. For intra-EU trade, the reference month is the calendar month during which VAT becomes chargeable on intra-EU acquisitions.

CONCEPT 6 – INSTITUTIONAL MANDATE

Sub-Concept 6.1: Legal acts and other agreements

- [The Malta Statistics Authority Act, 2000.](#) The Act empowers the NSO to collect, compile, extract and release official statistics related to demographic, social, environment, economic and general activities and conditions of Malta;
- [The Import Duties Act, chap. 337](#);
- [The Excise Duties Act, 1995](#);
- [The Value Added Tax Act, 1998](#);
- [Legal Notice 131 of 2004](#) (Value Added Tax – Collection of Supplementary Information, Regulations, 2004);
- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No. 638/2004](#) - Basic Regulation as amended by [Regulation \(EC\) No. 229/2009](#) and [Council Regulation \(EC\) No. 1982/2004](#) (Implementing Regulations) as amended by [Regulations \(EC\) Nos. 1915/2005, 91/2010](#) and [96/2010](#) for EU member States;
- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No. 471/2009](#) - (Basic Regulation) and [Council Regulation \(EC\) No. 1917/2000](#) (Implementing Regulations) as amended [by Regulations \(EC\) No. 92/2010](#) and [113/2010](#) for External Trade.

Sub-Concept 6.2: Data sharing

Formal and informal coordination and agreements between the NSO and other data-producing agencies are in place. A few examples of cooperation with agencies include the Central Bank of Malta (CBM), the Ministry for Finance, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), the Inland Revenue Department (IRD), and the Customs Department regarding the timely provision of statistics and/or access to their databases.

International trade data are mainly disseminated through monthly news releases covering several aspects. These releases are available on the NSO website:

https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_A4/International_Trade/Pages/International-Trade-in-Goods.aspx). In specific, monthly trade data are sent to the Ministry for Finance and the Central Bank of Malta. The bank uses trade data to update the bank's website with acknowledgement of the data source. The Ministry for Finance receives monthly trade data following publication of the news release. Moreover, international trade data is transmitted to Eurostat.

CONCEPT 7 – CONFIDENTIALITY

Sub-Concept 7.1: Confidentiality – Policy

At National level:

The NSO requests information for the compilation of official statistics according to the articles of the [MSA Act – Cap. 422](#) and the [Data Protection Act – Cap. 586](#) of the Laws of Malta implementing the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Article 40 of the MSA Act stipulates the restrictions on the use of information while Article 41 stipulates the prohibition of disclosure of information. Furthermore, Section IX of the Act (Offences and Penalties) lays down the measures to be taken in case of unlawful exercise of any officer of statistics regarding confidentiality of data.

Since its inception, the NSO has always assured that all data collected remains confidential and that it is used for statistical purposes only according to the articles and derogations stipulated in the laws quoted above. The Office is obliged to protect the identify of data providers and refrain from divulging any data to third parties that might lead to the identification of persons or entities.

During 2009, the NSO has set up a Statistical Disclosure Committee to ensure that statistical confidentiality is observed, especially when requests for microdata are received.

Upon employment, all NSO employees are informed of the rules and duties pertaining to confidential information and its treatment. In line with stipulations of the MSA Act, before commencing work, every employee is required to take an oath of secrecy whose text is included in the same Act.

An internal policy on anonymisation and pseudo-anonymisation is in place to ascertain that adequate methods are used for the protection of data which the office collects and shares with the public in its capacity as the National Statistics Office. The policy is meant to safeguard confidentiality of both personal and business data entrusted to the NSO. The document provides guidance for all NSO employees who process data on a daily basis as to how anonymisation and pseudo-anonymisation methods should be applied. The policy applies to all confidential, restricted and internal information, regardless of form (paper or electronic documents, applications and databases) that is received, processed, stored and disseminated by the NSO.

At European level:

[Regulation \(EC\) No 223/2009](#) on European statistics (recital 24 and Article 20(4) of 11 March 2009 (OJ L 87, p. 164), stipulates the need to establish common principles and guidelines ensuring the confidentiality of data used for the production of European statistics and the access to those confidential data with due account for technical developments and the requirements of users in a democratic society.

Sub-Concept 7.2: Confidentiality – Data Treatment

For Trade in Goods data, the principle of passive confidentiality applies. Through this principle, data on imports and exports are suppressed only upon formal request for confidentiality by the information provider. Confidentiality is granted for a limited duration and relative to a reference period as agreed with the relevant importer/exporter. The need for confidentiality is justified through the applicable dominance rule and is reviewed annually.

CONCEPT 8 – RELEASE POLICY

Sub-Concept 8.1: Release Calendar

An advance release calendar is maintained by the NSO and published on the NSO website. The calendar projects three months of news releases (including the current month and two subsequent months).

Sub-Concept 8.2: Release Calendar access

https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Release_Calendar/Pages/News-Release-Calendar.aspx

Sub-Concept 8.3: User access

An internal policy on dissemination is in place to govern the dissemination of official statistics in an impartial, independent and timely manner, making them available simultaneously to all users. The NSO's primary channel for the dissemination of official statistics is the NSO website. Tailored requests for statistical information may also be submitted through said website.

Trade Statistics News Releases are available in electronic format on the NSO website.

CONCEPT 9 – FREQUENCY OF DISSEMINATION

- Monthly News release;
- Monthly transmission of Aggregated data to Eurostat;
- Monthly transmission of detailed data to Eurostat on Intra-EU and Extra-EU trade;
- Annual transmission of data to Eurostat covering Trade by Economic Characteristics;
- Bi-annual transmission of aggregated Extra-EU trade by invoicing currency; and
- Annual transmission of trade data to the United Nations Statistical Division.

CONCEPT 10 – ACCESSIBILITY AND CLARITY

Sub-Concept 10.1: News release

The monthly news release "International Trade" is available electronically free of charge in PDF and spreadsheet format on the NSO website:

https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_A4/International_Trade/Pages/International-Trade-in-Goods.aspx

Sub-Concept 10.2: Publications

A set of selected indicators on trade data are included in an annual compendium named 'Malta in Figures'. The publication can also be accessed through the following link:

https://nso.gov.mt/en/publicatons/Publications_by_Unit/Documents/D2_Dissemination_Unit/Malta_in_Figures_2014.pdf

Another set of selected monthly indicators are published directly on the NSO website, which may be accessed through:

https://nso.gov.mt/Home/SELECTED_INDICATORS/Pages/Sub-Selected-Indicators/InternationalTrade.aspx

Sub-Concept 10.3: Online Database

No information about trade statistics is available through the online statistical database (StatDb).

Sub-Concept 10.4: Micro-data access

Micro-data access is not available.

Sub-Concept 10.5: Other

Ad-hoc reports for imports/exports data are disseminated (in various formats), upon request, and are subject to cost-recovery charges. Data can be made available at different levels and various formats according to the needs of the user.

Sub-Concept 10.6: Documentation on methodology

Work processes and procedures for the compilation of Trade Statistics are documented in a standardised reporting template and aligned with the GSBPM model. The model covers all phases of the statistical production process, from the initial stages of identifying what statistics are needed, to the final stages of dissemination and evaluation. GSBPM is only available internally and may be accessed by all NSO employees.

A detailed statement on the methodology used for the compilation of international trade data is disseminated on the NSO website under the 'Sources and Methods' section.

(https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Sources_and_Methods/Unit_A4/International_Trade/Pages/External-Trade-Statistics.aspx)

Sub-Concept 10.6.1: Metadata completeness rate

Information about all required metadata concepts (and sub-concepts thereof) are provided.

Sub-Concept 10.7: Quality Documentation

The unit is subject to the Eurostat Quality questionnaire which is conducted on an annual basis. This questionnaire is related to quality issues and is provided to Member States by Eurostat. The NSO has also developed an internal Quality Management Framework (QMF) which is built on common requirements of the ESS Code of Practice (ESS CoP). A document was prepared to include a set of general quality guidelines spanning over all statistical domains. Assuring methodological soundness is an integral part of the QMF, nonetheless, the document spans also on other areas related to institutional aspects.

CONCEPT 11 – QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Sub-Concept 11.1: Quality Assurance

The NSO discusses quality aspects of statistics in its annual planning meetings and follow-up meetings. Moreover, as an EU member country, Malta monitors methodology, quality standards, and outputs through regular reporting. The NSO ensures the accuracy of data released to the public and prepares clear methodological notes which explain the processes involved in the collection and production of official statistics.

The NSO has developed an internal Quality Management Framework (QMF) which is built on common requirements of the ESS Code of Practice (ESS CoP). A document was prepared to include a set of general quality guidelines spanning over all statistical domains. Assuring methodological soundness is an integral part of the QMF, nonetheless, the document spans also on other areas related to institutional aspects.

Every five to seven years, the NSO participates in a Peer Review exercise through which the compliance of its operations with principles of the ESS CoP is assessed by an expert team. Peer Reviews are indeed part of the European Statistical System (ESS) strategy to implement the ESS CoP.

Each NSI is expected to provide information as requested by a standard self-assessment questionnaire. Following this, an expert team visits the office to meet NSI representatives and main stakeholders. Peer Reviews result in a compliance report and the listing of a set of Improvement Actions which need to be followed up by the NSI. The next round of Peer Reviews is planned to be carried out in 2022.

Sub-Concept 11.2: Quality Assessment

The data can be considered of good quality. Various data quality checks and validations are applied to data at different stages of the data processing. These include:

- Various checks and validations at the data entry stage through the online Supplementary Declaration System;
- Built in data validations in the Schema XML file which is provided to users who want to bulk upload their data in the system;

- Continuous and ongoing data vetting of the Providers of Statistical Information (PSI's) microdata, including the value per item and value per kilo checks;
- In-depth macro data analysis involving various data checks and data extracts from our systems, and the comparison of the levels of imports and exports between same reference months in different years and comparisons between the same annual periods in different years by chapter.

CONCEPT 12 – RELEVANCE

Sub-Concept 12.1: User needs

The list of users includes:

- Eurostat;
- Ministry for Finance;
- Economic Policy;
- Central Bank;
- Students and researchers;
- Private individuals, and
- NSO users including, National Accounts, the Agricultural and Fisheries Unit and Balance of Payments.

Sub-Concept 12.2: User satisfaction

The last User Satisfaction Survey was held in 2014 with the aim to collect information about key users' satisfaction with statistical output. The NSO keeps record of the number of News Releases and publications disseminated on its website, the users to whom statistical products are provided, as well as the number of requests that are processed every year.

News Releases and tailor-made statistical outputs are assessed on account of their quality, timeliness, and on their ability to meet users' needs.

Sub-Concept 12.3: Data Completeness

Malta compiles the EU trade statistics which are based on the EU legislation which is directly applicable in the Member States. In particular, the legislation includes a clear and precise list of all the statistical variables to be provided by the Member States to Eurostat. All the mandatory variables are provided by the NSO. As such, the data completeness rate stands at 100%.

CONCEPT 13 – ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY

Sub-Concept 13.1: Overall accuracy

As intra-EU trade statistics stem from Intrastat declarations by the traders, a main source of error that affects accuracy of intra-EU data is late or non-response. Intra-EU as well as extra-EU trade

data accuracy is also affected by specific characteristics of this statistical field, such as the exemption thresholds applicable in order to reduce the burden on enterprises.

Whilst complete coverage can be achieved with the use of estimates, the NSO is not currently making any estimates since it is difficult to have a clear pattern of certain movements of goods such as fuel and trade in vessels and aircraft. However, the NSO is currently in the process of exploring the introduction of estimates to minimise as much as possible the differences between first and final data.

Sub-Concept 13.2: Sampling errors

Not applicable since no sampling is conducted.

Sub-Concept 13.3: Non-sampling error

Not available (in quantified terms). Possible sources of non-sampling errors include misclassification of commodity codes, non-response, late response, data entry errors and treatment of specific movements of trade

Sub-Concept 13.3.1: Coverage error

Not available in quantified terms. Possible sources of coverage errors include misclassification of commodity codes, data entry errors and treatment of specific movements of trade.

Sub-Concept 13.3.1.1: Over Coverage

Not applicable.

Sub-Concept 13.3.1.2: Common Units Proportion

Not Applicable. Only administrative sources are used.

Sub-Concept 13.3.2: Measurement error

Possible sources of errors can arise from; misclassification of commodity codes, data entry errors and different treatment of specific movements of trade. The quantitative assessment for such errors is not possible.

Sub-Concept 13.3.3: Non-response error

Not applicable since administrative sources are used.

Sub-Concept 13.3.3.1: Unit non-response

Not applicable since administrative sources are used.

Sub-Concept 13.3.3.2: Item non-response

Not applicable since administrative sources are used.

Sub-Concept 13.3.4: Processing error

Not applicable since administrative sources are used.

Sub-Concept 13.3.5: Model assumption error

No estimation or adjustment models are applied.

CONCEPT 14 – TIMELINESS AND PUNCTUALITY**Sub-Concept 14.1: Timeliness**

Trade data covering both Intra-EU and Extra-EU are disseminated about 40 days after the end of the reference month.

Sub-Concept 14.2: Punctuality

International Trade News Releases for the reference year of 2020 were always issued not later than 11:00am.

CONCEPT 15 – COHERENCE AND COMPARABILITY**Sub-Concept 15.1: Comparability – Geographical**

One characteristic of international trade statistics is that they are not compiled on the balance sheet principle. Consequently, when exports from country A to country B are compared with imports to country B from country A, these figures may not match due to the adoption of different trade systems in use, and methodological aspects. Once asymmetries are identified and measured through a mirror analysis, further expert studies and analytical work are initiated to identify the main causes. Some of the causes may be easy to detect and correct while for some cases, it may be harder to pinpoint. In any case, data corrections and/or changes in methodologies and practices require the Member States involved to perform the asymmetry analysis jointly, to agree on the asymmetry causes and, on the corrections/adjustments carried out in their respective data. Such an exercise between Member States is called a 'reconciliation exercise'.

Results from these studies carried out in-house or by Eurostat are not always easy to carry out as the asymmetry itself can be attributed to several factors, the identification of which is quite

resource dependent. One of Malta's main drawback in resolving asymmetries with other member States is the level of thresholds in the other partner country, which would include estimates for below the threshold trade with Malta in that Member State. Nevertheless, asymmetry exercises serve to indicate where potential discrepancies can be discovered. A study on asymmetries to include Malta's main EU partners was carried out in 2010. When compared to the those of all Member States, Malta's asymmetry levels may be viewed as being of a relatively negligible nature, however, for national purposes, Malta makes every effort to improve the situation.

Sub-Concept 15.2: Comparability – Over Time

Changes due to definitions, coverage or methods and other changes have an impact on the continuity of international trade series. The impact of the different methodological and practical changes that have occurred in recent years (enlargement of the EU, changes in the Intrastat and Extrastat legislation, changes in product nomenclatures, etc.) is difficult to assess precisely. The accession of new Member States to the EU may cause problems to the comparability over time since it implies for the acceding country a change from an administrative data source (Extrastat) to a purely statistical data collection system (Intrastat). This may have an impact on the accuracy of statistics at a detailed level. Time series of trade data on a consistent basis for most aggregates are available electronically as from 1995. Data for earlier periods are available on paper publications.

Sub-Concept 15.3: Coherence – Cross Domain

Apart from the international trade statistics, information on trade flows can be found in National Accounts, Business Statistics and Balance of Payments. The compilation of the data and the production of the above-mentioned statistics follow the recommendations (sources and methods) of different international organisations, i.e. Eurostat, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations (UN), etc. The Quality Report on International Trade Statistics published by Eurostat documents the main differences between these sources in terms of concepts and definitions, statistical unit or object, classification (nomenclature) used, geographical breakdown, reference period and correction methods.

Sub-Concept 15.3.1: Coherence – Sub-Annual and Annual statistics

Monthly and annual figures are published as provisional due to possible revisions and updates, where the new figures will be included in the subsequent News Releases when available.

Sub-Concept 15.3.2: Coherence – National Accounts

Adjustments from international trade data to balance of payments merchandise data are also disseminated by the NSO in its annual National Accounts publication.

Sub-Concept 15.4: Coherence – Internal

Considerable component detail is disseminated along with the totals for both exports and imports to permit assessment of reasonableness. The monthly news release covering international trade includes data which are consistent across different classifications. The news release includes tables which cover Balance of Trade by quarter, annual/monthly/year to date and quarterly trade by final use (BEC, [Broad Economic Categories]), balance of trade classified by 1st digit SITC rev 3, direction of trade for the reference month and year to date of the current and previous period, and trade by principal trading commodities classified by the CN chapter.

CONCEPT 16 – COST AND BURDEN

To produce statistical data, the human resources involved in compiling International Trade Statistics include; one Head of Unit, two Principal Statisticians, one Statistician, two Administrative Officers (scale 5), and one Administrative Officer (scale 2).

Due to the use of administrative sources and data being legally required to be submitted from Intrastat traders by the VAT authority, the additional burden is minimal.

CONCEPT 17 – DATA REVISION

Sub-Concept 17.1: Data revision – Policy

Data are revised frequently according to national needs and practices. They become normally final from six months up to more than one year after the reference year. Revisions to older data are also possible. Malta sends the revised data to Eurostat and publishes them to its users as soon as they become available.

At the NSO, there is currently no internal policy governing revisions that occur for all statistics produced. Nonetheless, a revisions policy is being drafted to safeguard a coordinated revisions system across statistical domains. This policy will take account of the need and causes for revisions; time and frequency of revisions; data and other statistical products affected by such revisions; and length of periods revised.

Sub-Concept 17.2: Data revision – Practice and Data Revision

Monthly, annual and quarterly data which are published in the monthly news release are marked as provisional and revisions are reflected in the next available news release. Revisions and methodological changes of a substantial nature are referenced in the methodological notes section at the end of each news release. Data which are still provisional and subject to changes due to corrections, revisions or methodological changes, are marked accordingly. Revision studies and analyses are undertaken as needed.

CONCEPT 18 – STATISTICAL PROCESSING

Sub-Concept 18.1: Source data

The source of international trade data covering non-EU countries is the Customs Administration, which provides an electronic extract of customs declarations data to the NSO. The data are collected by an automated system which replaced ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data). The current system, in use since May 2004, is designated as Customs Electronic System (CES/MEX) covering both Imports and Exports. This system handles all customs declarations where both importers and exporters are obliged by law to report using electronic data transmission all their transactions with non-EU countries.

The Supplementary Declaration System (Intrastat) is used to collect trade data covering transactions between EU Member States. Arrivals cover goods that are produced in the EU or which are in free circulation with respect to EU Customs Law that are received in Malta, while dispatches record the same designated community goods that are sent to other Member States.

Traders who annually exceed the exemption threshold of €700 are to submit their monthly declarations within 10 working days after the end of the reference month. Most traders follow the NSO's recommendation to declare on a per consignment basis. Failures to declare in time or not at all are checked and noted by the VAT Department which according to the VAT regulation can initiate a regulatory offence procedure which may result in a fine for defaulters. Data providers can submit their information in one of the following ways:

1. Electronically through a web-based form. Traders opting for this practice will be provided with their own username and password that would allow them to compile and transmit their data in a highly confidential manner and within a very secure environment; or
2. In hard copy format to the relative Supplementary Information Collection Offices at the Customs Department in Valletta, the Customs Section at the Malta International Airport or directly to the NSO. The Customs Department has been appointed as a Supplementary Information Collection Office for this purpose by the VAT Department.

Sub-Concept 18.2: Frequency of data collection

Monthly.

Sub-Concept 18.3: Data Collection

For data related to Non-EU trade, the data are available and complete at the end of each month. Data are extracted electronically from Customs by the NSO.

For the Intrastat system, data are mostly collected online and are available quite early due to the prevailing per consignment usage of the system.

Sub-Concept 18.4: Data Validation

Validations at data source are carried out by the Customs Electronic System (CES) and Intrastat System on the most important data elements that are required. These include the verification and validation of the Combined Nomenclature (CN) for Intra-EU trade data and the Taric code for Extra-EU data, the country information and the value. The Taric code is made up of the CN 8-digit code plus another two digits. Additionally, NSO staff review and analyse the plausibility of the data by checking the statistical value and weight of each commodity. All records are checked for correctness with various IT tools and statistical concepts. Other validations at entry point include validations on the statistical and invoice value, the period covered, Nature of Transaction, Mode of Transport, Terms of Delivery, and additional requirements of the CN code in terms of Net Mass and Supplementary Quantity.

Sub-Concept 18.5: Data Compilation

Up till the end of April 2004, Customs Declarations were the main source of all International Trade Statistics data. As from May 2004, the Customs Department collects the basic data for non-EU Trade. At the end of each month, an electronic extraction of customs declarations covering non-EU movements of goods across the customs territory of the Maltese Islands is transferred to the NSO.

Intra-EU Trade data are collected by means of the Supplementary Declaration System. All transactions above the exemption threshold of €700 established by the VAT Department and covering arrivals and dispatches of goods between Malta and the other EU Member States are to be recorded.

Validations at data source are carried out by the Customs Electronic System (CES) and Intrastat System on the most important data elements that are required. These include the verification and validation of the Combined Nomenclature (CN) for Intra-EU trade data and the Taric code for Extra-EU data, the country information and the value. The Taric code is made up of the CN 8-digit code plus another two digits. Additionally, NSO staff review and analyse the plausibility of the data by checking the statistical value and weight of each commodity. All records are checked for correctness with various IT tools and statistical concepts. Other validations at entry point include validations on the statistical and invoice value, the period covered, Nature of Transaction, Mode of Transport, Terms of Delivery, and additional requirements of the CN code in terms of Net Mass and Supplementary Quantity.

Sub-Concept 18.5.1: Imputation

No imputations are conducted.

Sub-Concept 18.6: Adjustment

Adjustments to improve coverage are applied to some categories of specific movements such as the inclusion of trade in sea vessels and aircraft, which by their nature, may never cross the local customs borders. Additional information is checked with national registers for ships and aircraft.

Sub-Concept 18.6.1: Seasonal Adjustment

No seasonal adjustment is applied.

CONCEPT 19 – COMMENT

No further comments.