



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 December 2022

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Fifty-fourth session

28 February–3 March 2023

Item 3 (f) of the provisional agenda*

Items for discussion and decision: business and trade statistics

Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2022/324 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics. The report contains an update on the activities of the Committee in refining its work programme to improve the integration of business, trade and other statistical domains and to address new priority areas. In the report, the Committee presents its new work programme, the progress made in the revision of the trade statistics manuals and the progress in the development of a global initiative to improve the availability of unique identifiers for businesses. The Commission is invited to express its views on the progress of work and to provide guidance on the elements of the work programme.

* E/CN.3/2023/1.



Report of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics

I. Introduction

1. In its decision 53/119, adopted at its fifty-third session, held in February and March 2022, the Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics (E/CN.3/2022/20), and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the Committee;

(b) Endorsed the update of the strategic view underscoring the importance of a horizontal and vertical integration of business and trade statistics and identifying emerging priority areas, namely digitalization, productivity and innovation, well-being and social inclusion, and green economy; welcomed the new work programme; and requested the Committee to coordinate with relevant committees and groups of experts to avoid duplication of work and strengthen coordination with other statistical domains;

(c) Encouraged the Committee to share practices on microdata linking and on the development of an integrated data infrastructure to link microdata on people and businesses;

(d) Took note of the manual on the maturity model for statistical business registers, encouraged the development of a toolkit and endorsed the launching of a regular global assessment on the status of implementation of statistical business registers in countries, encouraged close coordination with the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers and other relevant groups, welcomed the proposed capacity-building activities for statistical business registers, and suggested developing guidelines for the integration of geospatial information into statistical business registers;

(e) Took note of volume 1 of the manual on the principal indicators on business and trade statistics, encouraged the preparation of volume 2 of the manual to further elaborate on the international trade indicators, and encouraged the Committee to prioritize the indicators and to assess the possibility of developing global databases for these indicators building on existing initiatives and based on the capacity of countries in producing this information;

(f) Welcomed the work programme, terms of reference and research agenda of the task team on international trade statistics, including the development of a maturity model for statistics on international trade in services and data tools for international merchandise trade statistics, and expressed its appreciation for the progress made in identifying the list of issues for the revision of the trade statistics manuals;

(g) Supported the development of a global initiative aimed at improving the availability of unique business identifiers in administrative data sources, considered essential to help countries in strengthening statistical business registers and better understanding globalization; and requested the Committee to further elaborate the initiative and to report to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session, in 2023.

2. The present report contains an update on the activities of the Committee in refining its work programme to improve the integration of business and trade statistics and coordination with other statistical domains and to address the new priority areas. In the report, the Committee presents a refined work programme of the Committee and its task teams in section II.A; the progress made in the revision of the trade

statistics manuals in section II.B; the progress made in the development of an integrated data infrastructure to link microdata on people and businesses in section II.C; and the progress made in the development of a global initiative to improve the availability of unique identifiers for businesses in section II.D. Other activities of the Committee are presented in section III.

II. Progress of work of the Committee in 2022

3. The Committee held its fifth meeting from 6 to 9 September 2022 in New York. The Committee discussed its future priorities in the light of its consolidated strategic view on business and trade statistics, which focuses not only on stronger integration between business and trade statistics, but also on stronger coordination across other statistical domains and with the macroeconomic frameworks, such as the national accounts and the environmental accounts. Particular focus for the future work of the Committee is on: (a) digitalization, productivity and innovation; (b) well-being and social inclusion; and (c) green economy. These areas will be integrated into the workplan of the relevant task teams of the Committee. The Committee also discussed new areas of work, such as integrating gender measures into relevant business and trade statistics; the development of an integrated data infrastructure to link microdata on people and businesses; accessing and using new data sources, such as big data; and a global initiative on unique identifiers.

A. Progress on the work programmes of the task teams

4. The Committee discussed the progress of work of its task teams and identified additional topics to be further elaborated, namely: guidance on the nexus between digitalization, innovation and productivity, building on country practices; the development of a manual on the integration between statistical business registers and trade registers; guidance on integrating gender measures in relevant business and trade statistics, building on country practices; and improved coordination with experts in other statistical domains on key strategic issues and common priorities. The Bureau of the Committee will ensure that the work is coordinated among the task teams in order to minimize overlap of the activities and clarify assignments among the task teams.

5. *Task team on business dynamics, demography and entrepreneurship.* The task team on business dynamics, demography and entrepreneurship is led by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico. The work programme of this task team for the next biennium includes work on gender (the development of a guidance document on how to integrate gender aspects into relevant business and trade statistics, and continuing the discussions with countries and international organizations about business and gender statistics) and work on entrepreneurship (identifying additional characteristics on entrepreneurship in businesses through a dedicated survey; creating a repository with country experiences to measure entrepreneurship; and identifying policy questions about the contribution of enterprises to the economy and the required data sources).

6. *Task team on globalization and digitalization.* The work programme of the task team on globalization and digitalization, which is led by Statistics Canada, includes identifying data gaps in comparable measures for sectoral levels of productivity; measuring the value of intangibles and investments; improving productivity data timeliness; identifying the adoption level of technologies in businesses and its contribution to business success; improving data timeliness, coherence and adaptability in relation to the adoption of technologies by businesses; monitoring data

on trends and developments in global value chains, as well as their impact on globalization; and linking globalization and digitalization to business innovations related to environmental and societal issues, such as climate change and well-being.

7. *Task team on well-being and sustainability.* The work programme of the task team on well-being and sustainability, which is led by Statistics Denmark, includes developing recommendations for the measurement of selected key aspects of the effect of the enterprise sector on equality and social inclusion (including gender, vulnerable groups and social enterprises) for businesses; developing indicators on selected key aspects of the “green transition” of the enterprise sector and the environmental and climate effects of this transition; collaborating more closely on issues related to business for the compilation of environmental accounts; and contributing to further develop and promote integration of data and statistics from different domains, including microdata linking, with a focus on data related to well-being and sustainability.

8. *Task team on international trade statistics.* The work programme of the task team on international trade statistics, which is led by Statistics Portugal and the Office des Changes of Morocco, includes revising the trade manuals (*International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* and the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010*), while ensuring consistency with the update of other statistical standards, such as the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual*; drafting guidance notes on the various conceptual topics related to the revision of the trade manuals and other conceptual topics that may warrant separate handbooks (such as the existing *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade*¹ and *Accounting for Global Value Chains: GVC Satellite Accounts and Integrated Business Statistics*²); developing guidance and building on national best practices on integrating business and trade statistics; finalizing the second volume of the manual on principal indicators for business and trade statistics; and preparing a maturity model for statistics on international trade in services and related capacity-building on trade concepts, the maturity model and trade data tools. The progress made in the revision of the trade statistics manuals is presented in section II.B below.

9. *Task teams on exhaustive business registers and capacity-building.* The two task teams on exhaustive business registers and capacity-building, led by Statistics Netherlands and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, respectively, have been working on the finalization of the manual on the maturity model for statistical business registers to address the comments from the global consultation. Once the manual is finalized, work will continue on the development of the toolkit for the maturity model and the development of the global assessment on statistical business registers. The task teams will continue to coordinate with the Wiesbaden Group, especially in regard to the coordination of the global assessment on statistical business registers and the country progress reports collected by the Wiesbaden Group. The task teams will also address a number of topics related to statistical business registers, such as: incorporating geospatial information in the statistical business register, building on country practices; the methodological development of the global register of multinationals jointly maintained by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the integration of the statistical business register and the trade register; the global initiative on unique identifiers for businesses; guidance on statistical units; microdata linking and the statistical business

¹ Available at <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/its/Handbook-on-Measuring-Digital-Trade-Version-1.pdf>.

² Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/business-stat/Assets/Documents/GVC/Accounting%20for%20Global%20Value%20Chains%20-%20White%20Cover%20Version.pdf>.

register; protecting confidentiality when sharing data; and the use of big data for the statistical business register. The task teams will continue to work on the preparation of training materials and technical assistance related to statistical business registers; the organization of webinars on specific topics related to statistical business registers; and assisting the task team on international trade statistics in capacity-building tools.

10. As the work of the two task teams has been closely coordinated, the Committee proposes to combine them into one task team on statistical business registers, with the respective task team leaders becoming Co-Chairs. The new task team will still serve both goals of capacity-building and exhaustive statistical business registers. New terms of reference have been prepared and submitted to the Statistical Commission as a background document to the present report.

B. Progress made in the revision of the trade statistics manuals

11. The Statistical Commission, in its decision 52/107, endorsed revising the trade manuals (*International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* and the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010*), while ensuring consistency with the update of other statistical standards, such as SNA and the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual*; and welcomed the creation of the task team on international trade statistics for the revision of the trade-related standards. The task team has already taken stock of revisions to SNA and the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual* and reviewed impacts on updates to the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services* and *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions*, the conceptual framework and timelines for revision. The task team is in the process of drafting guidance notes on the various conceptual topics related to the revision of the trade manuals and other conceptual topics that may warrant separate handbooks (such as the existing *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade* and *Accounting for Global Value Chains: GVC Satellite Accounts and Integrated Business Statistics*) and developing guidance and building on national best practices on integrating business and trade statistics. The task team plans that each guidance note will be drafted by a team of contributors and will go through peer review by the Committee Bureau and global consultations and subsequent revision.

C. Development of an integrated data infrastructure to link microdata on people and businesses

12. The Committee started the discussion during its previous meeting, in September 2022, on the development of an integrated data infrastructure to link microdata on people and businesses. The Committee reviewed some country examples in this area and discussed possible links of concepts and methods used in population and housing censuses where population registers, address/dwelling/building registers and other administrative data are brought together to provide the basis for the population and housing census.

13. The Committee recognized the importance of a continuous dialogue with experts from population and housing censuses in order to share experiences and practices related to the work on registers. There may be an opportunity to develop common guidelines that would eventually improve the integration of registers of businesses and people.

D. Global initiative to improve the availability of unique identifiers for businesses

14. At its fifty-third session, in March 2022, the Statistical Commission supported the development of a global initiative aimed at improving the availability of unique business identifiers in administrative data sources, and requested the Committee to further elaborate the initiative and to report to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session, in 2023. The main objectives of the global initiative are to strengthen the transparency of businesses in countries by improving their registration; to improve the availability of unique business identifiers in administrative data sources in countries; and to promote access to and sharing of administrative data for statistical business registers. Strengthening the administrative business registration in countries and the establishment of unique identifiers for legal entities is considered an important first step in improving the statistical business registers, especially in countries where the administrative data system for businesses is not well established. In addition, in order to better understand globalization and the profiling of multinationals in their cross-border legal ownership structures, it is important to link national unique identifiers with global identifiers, which will in turn facilitate the establishment and maintenance of global registers containing the legal structure of multinationals, in particular the global registers (maintained by the Statistics Division and OECD) and the link between business and trade statistics. It will be important to explore how to leverage the existing initiative of the global legal entity identifier system, which provides global unique identifiers of legal entities and their ownership structure and has a robust infrastructure of the issuance of identifiers with countries.

15. The Committee proposes that the initial focus be on outreach to relevant international and regional organizations; coordinating technical cooperation activities aimed at strengthening the administrative registration of businesses in countries and the relevant legislation; developing guidelines and case studies on the importance of a well-functioning registration system in countries for statistical business registers; and demonstrating through case studies the importance and benefit of linking national identifiers with global identifiers, such as the legal entity identifier system. The draft proposal for the initiative on global identifiers is submitted as a background document to the present report.

III. Coordination with other statistical domains and other activities

16. In line with its strategic view on business and trade statistics, the Committee continued to actively reach out to groups of experts in other statistical domains in order to improve the coordination of activities and identify areas of common interest. During its previous meeting, the Committee engaged in a discussion with experts from national accounts, environmental accounts and industrial statistics.

17. The Committee will continue to coordinate with the Wiesbaden Group in the area of statistical business registers and also on the country progress reports and the global assessment on statistical business registers. The collection of country progress reports is done by the Chair of the Wiesbaden Group in connection with the Wiesbaden Group meeting. In 2021, The INEGI developed an online data collection system to facilitate the collection and compilation of these reports. Due to the rotation of the Wiesbaden Group Chair, it was proposed that the Statistics Division conduct the online collection of the country progress reports on behalf of the Chair of the Wiesbaden Group.

IV. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

18. The Commission is invited to express its views on:

(a) The activities of the Committee and its task teams, and the merging of the task teams on exhaustive business registers and capacity-building into a single task team on statistical business registers;

(b) The development of guidance on the integration of business and trade statistics and on the integration of gender aspects into relevant business and trade statistics;

(c) The work and progress on the revision of the trade statistics manuals;

(d) The elements for a global initiative to improve the availability of unique identifiers for businesses.
