



Measuring Cross-Border E-Commerce

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Eurasian Regional Workshop
“International Trade Statistics: Edge of Tomorrow”
15 November 2019
Nur Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan

DEFINITION OF E-COMMERCE



“The sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving and placing of orders.” (OECD)

- What counts is the method of placing the order, on the web or through EDI
- Excludes orders by telephone calls or email
- Payment and ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be online

MEASURING E-COMMERCE THROUGH SURVEYS



- Enterprise surveys for the supply side
 - Capture B2B and B2C
- Consumer surveys for the demand side
 - Capture B2C and C2C
- Balance of payments
 - Imports and exports of goods and services
- Postal data
 - Goods requiring delivery

ENTERPRISE SURVEYS AND CONSUMER SURVEYS



- Questions (or full modules) on ICT use
 - Receiving or placing orders over the Internet (UNCTAD core indicator)
 - Value of orders
 - Domestic or cross-border
- Dedicated ICT surveys
- Currently available data do not allow to assess the proportion of cross-border e-commerce in trade statistics.
- Enterprise surveys could capture both export sales and cross-border e-commerce sales.

- Surveys of households and individuals
- Questions on overseas online purchases
 - On the occurrence, but rarely on the value

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS



- Imports and exports of goods or services
- Digital products (intangible) purchased over the Internet are not declared to Customs
- Low value shipments (most B2C) might not be captured in trade statistics
- Goods and services may be classified differently depending on whether they are licensed, purchased, rented, etc.
- Measuring e-commerce based on balance of payments classification would need a very granular breakdown

POSTAL DATA



- Compiled by the postal system
- On the number of postal items (letters, packets, parcels and express mail) and payments
- International postal tracking information (big data)
- Postal and parcel delivery statistics are a proxy for cross-border e-commerce of goods
- Bilateral flows can be correlated with trade or Internet data flows

PRIVATE SECTOR DATA



- Data from e-commerce companies (dominant platforms and online retailers)
- Parcel delivery data from private logistics companies
- Internet traffic
- Payments data (electronic funds transfer, credit cards)

WHAT ARE WE MISSING?



- Value of overseas e-commerce sales broken down by B2B or B2C
 - Best captured by enterprise surveys
- Cross-country benchmarking
 - Not enough developing and transition countries collecting the data
 - Using internationally agreed definitions and core indicators
- More granularity in balance of payments
- Trade in digital products
- Agreed methodologies to correlate data from various sources for analytical purposes

FIRST MEETING OF UNCTAD WORKING GROUP ON MEASURING E-COMMERCE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY



- Geneva, 3-4 December 2019
- Themes stemming from IGE in April 2019:
 1. Revision of UNCTAD Manual on Information Economy Statistics
 2. Measuring domestic and cross-border e-commerce
 3. Stocktaking , sharing of experiences and good practices
- Complementing the work of other international organizations and groups
- Interested? ict4d@unctad.org
- Short link <https://bit.ly/2Xc4NBM>

PARTICIPANTS IN THE UNCTAD WG-MEDE

- **Governments** (National Statistical Offices, Ministries of Trade, of ICT, or other competent authorities producing official statistics);
- Relevant **international organizations**, who shall be invited to participate (for ex. ILO, IMF, ITU, OECD, UNOSSC, UN Regional Commissions, UNSD, WCO, World Bank and WTO)
- **Research** networks (for ex. DIODE, LirneAsia, Research ICT Africa, NIC.br/Cetic.br and DIRSI)
- **Experts** from civil society, the private sector and academia may be invited, for consultative purposes, specific topics and themes.

RECENT UNCTAD OUTPUTS ON MEASURING E-COMMERCE



- B2C E-commerce Index 2018
https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tn_unctad_ict4d12_en.pdf
- Implementing surveys of ICT-enabled services exports
https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tn_unctad_ict4d11_en.pdf
- In search of cross-border e-commerce data
https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tn_unctad_ict4d06_en.pdf
- Latest e-commerce estimates
<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2034>
- Latest data on digitally deliverable services trade
<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2035>