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
• 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

• Implementing surveys of ICT-enabled services exports

• In search of cross-border e-commerce data

• Latest e-commerce estimates

• Latest data on digitally deliverable services trade