

DECISION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

No. 3/2025

Adopted on 6 March 2025

On Enhancing Cooperation on Trade-related Statistics among CEFTA Parties

The Joint Committee,

Having regard to Articles 40.4 and 41.5 of Annex 1 to the Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement ("CEFTA 2006") done in Bucharest on 19 December 2006 ;

Being resolved to conduct trade relations in accordance with the rules and disciplines of the WTO, as referred to in the Preamble to the CEFTA 2006;

Acknowledging the importance of cooperation on statistics for managing overall trade relations and, therefore, striving to expand such cooperation within the CEFTA framework;

Acknowledging the need to timely and regularly exchange statistical data on trade in goods, trade in services, Foreign Direct Investments, and Foreign Affiliates among the CEFTA Parties ;

Seeking to improve the statistical practices in CEFTA Parties, the quality of intra-CEFTA trade data, and the ways of measuring trade in goods and services;

Has decided as follows:

Article 1

General organization of the statistical cooperation between CEFTA Parties in relation to trade-related statistics

The CEFTA Parties shall cooperate in the field of trade-related statistics through the CEFTA Working Group on Statistics (hereafter, the "Working Group"). The Working Group shall support the implementation of this Decision.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Decision, the following Definitions shall apply:

- (a) FATS: Foreign Affiliates Statistics
- (b) FDI: Foreign Direct Investment
- (c) HS: Harmonized System
- (d) Working Group: CEFTA Working Group on Statistics

Article 3

Role and responsibilities of the CEFTA Secretariat as regards the cooperation on trade-related statistics between CEFTA Parties

- (1) The CEFTA Secretariat shall assume the coordination of the data and metadata transmission from CEFTA Parties to the CEFTA Secretariat in accordance with the specifications defined by the Working Group on the basis of Article 3 of this Decision. In particular, the CEFTA Secretariat shall develop data quality and consistency checks that it applies to the datasets received from CEFTA Parties. The CEFTA Secretariat shall liaise with the CEFTA Parties to settle any issue stemming from the application of these data quality and consistency checks.
- (2) The CEFTA Secretariat shall coordinate the implementation of the Pluriannual Action Plan for Cooperation on Trade-related Statistics agreed by the Working Group.

Article 4

Pluriannual Action Plan for Cooperation on Trade-related Statistics

Within the Working Group, the CEFTA Parties shall agree on a Pluriannual Action Plan for Cooperation on Trade-related Statistics with the goal of fostering further methodological convergence among the CEFTA Parties in the field of trade-related statistics and enhancing data exchange in terms of scope and frequency.

Article 5

Data and metadata sharing

- (1) CEFTA Parties commit to transmit to the CEFTA Secretariat specific datasets on trade in goods, trade in services, FDI and FATS, not less than on an annual basis, at set dates in respect to the reference period.
- (2) The dates for their transmission shall be defined by the Working Group in respect of quarterly and annual periods of reference.
- (3) The CEFTA Parties shall strive to annually transmit to the CEFTA Secretariat datasets related to trade in goods at the 8-digit Harmonised System (HS) level (HS6+2). Such transmission shall occur in accordance with any applicable rules on the confidentiality of sensitive data of the CEFTA Parties. The CEFTA Secretariat shall treat these datasets confidentially.
- (4) The Working Group may examine the possibility for the CEFTA Parties to transmit to the CEFTA Secretariat specific datasets on trade in goods, trade in services, FDI, and FATS in respect of monthly periods of reference.
- (5) All datasets transmitted by CEFTA Parties to the CEFTA Secretariat should be accompanied by reference and structural metadata allowing for an unambiguous assessment of their coverage and of the possible limitations attached to these datasets.
- (6) The precise content and structure of the reference and structural metadata accompanying each dataset to be transmitted by the CEFTA Parties to the CEFTA Secretariat shall be defined by the Working Group.
- (7) CEFTA Parties shall be trained on the metadata structure to be used in metadata transmission to the CEFTA Secretariat.
- (8) Data quality and consistency checks shall be developed by the CEFTA Secretariat and shall be applied to the datasets received from CEFTA Parties.
- (9) CEFTA Parties commit to cooperate with the CEFTA Secretariat in order to resolve any issues identified by the CEFTA Secretariat as a result of the implementation of these quality and consistency checks. In this regard, CEFTA Parties strive to check and either correct the data at stake or to provide the necessary explanations regarding the errors or possible errors identified.

Article 6

Confidentiality

- (1) CEFTA Parties are free to apply the principles of active and/or passive confidentiality as they deem appropriate in the production of their trade-related statistics.
- (2) The confidentiality rules applied and their possible impact on the data produced should be clearly explained in the metadata referring to the statistics concerned by the application of these rules.
- (3) Notwithstanding the aforementioned, CEFTA Parties are encouraged to transmit to the CEFTA Secretariat all the confidential data included in the datasets to be transmitted to the CEFTA Secretariat as per the decisions taken by the Working Group, as far as this is compatible with their own laws, regulations, and administrative decisions.
- (4) A special flag should be attached to the confidential data transmitted by the CEFTA Parties to the CEFTA Secretariat so as to guarantee the preservation of this confidentiality by the CEFTA Secretariat.
- (5) The CEFTA Secretariat is obliged to maintain the absolute confidentiality of all confidential data it has received from CEFTA Parties as soon as these data have been identified as confidential by the CEFTA Parties by the attachment of the confidential flag thereto.
- (6) The CEFTA Secretariat shall exclusively use the confidential data it has received from CEFTA Parties for the production of CEFTA aggregates and other statistical purposes.

Article 7

Capacity building in the area of trade-related statistics

- (1) With a view to fostering methodological convergence and data comparability of trade-related statistics among CEFTA Parties, the CEFTA Secretariat shall seek to organise training courses, workshops, study visits and technical assistance missions on statistics on trade-related statistics and trainings on using metadata structures for transmission of metadata. These activities should contribute to enhancing data development and exchange, as well as methodological convergence among CEFTA Parties.
- (2) The specific activities to be implemented in this context shall be defined on an annual basis by the Working Group.

Article 8

Commitment to harmonization and coherence

- (1) With a view to fostering methodological convergence and data comparability of trade-related statistics among CEFTA Parties, regular mirror and reconciliation exercises related to statistics on trade in goods and statistics on trade in services may be organized among CEFTA Parties.
- (2) The performance of each mirror and reconciliation exercise shall give rise to the production of a detailed report on the discrepancies between statistics on trade in goods and trade in services that are produced by CEFTA Parties taking part in the exercise. The report shall include a detailed analysis of the major discrepancies observed, of their most probable origin, of the estimated right statistics, and of the measures to be taken by each CEFTA Party to reduce and, if possible, eliminate the observed discrepancies in the future.
- (3) The programme of mirror and reconciliation exercises among CEFTA Parties shall be defined by the Working Group on an annual basis, duly taking into account any possible restriction or reservation with respect to the feasibility or validity of such an exercise for some CEFTA Parties owing to any specific limitation attached to the trade-related statistics produced by this Party or by other CEFTA Parties with regard to their trade flows with this Party.

Article 9
Dissemination

- (1) The CEFTA Secretariat shall disseminate the data and metadata received from the CEFTA Parties while fully ensuring confidentiality as defined in Article 5(4) and Article 6 of this Decision.
- (2) The CEFTA Secretariat shall be able to use all datasets, related to trade in goods and received from the CEFTA Parties under Article 5(3) of this Decision, for purposes of internal analysis, but may only make these datasets publicly available up to the 4-digit HS level.
- (3) The CEFTA Secretariat shall produce and disseminate economic analyses based on the data and metadata received from the CEFTA Parties, while fully ensuring confidentiality as defined in Article 6 of this Decision.
- (4) Non-confidential trade-related statistics of the CEFTA Parties shall be disseminated through the CEFTA online statistical portal.

Article 10
Entry into Force

This decision shall enter into force on the day of its adoption.

This decision was adopted in Pristina, on 6 March 2025, in the presence of representatives of all CEFTA Parties.