



Activity Title and Number: Study Visit on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) A011-C4	Beneficiary: General Administration of Customs of PRC (GAC)
Location and Date: Europe 13-21 September 2011	Stakeholders: Eurostat

Brief Activity Report

Relevance and Impact

Following a needs assessment study on EU China statistics cooperation in 2009, both the EU and China identified a specific number of issues that posed challenges to the harmonisation of EU-China external trade data. A supporting solution discussed would be the introduction of a ground measure that is able to help interpret discrepancies in data released by the EU and China to enable deeper understanding of how each region's counterpart organises their respective external trade statistics.

To aid in this objective and address the barriers to harmonisation, one of the preconized actions in the needs assessment was to set up a study visit in Europe where GAC officials could observe the key aspects of IMTS organisation in EU and Member State statistical bodies. The study tour, organised under the support of EUCTP, **offered an excellent opportunity for GAC statisticians to gain a comprehensive overview of the European statistical system.** In addition, the visit to Eurostat provided unique conditions to realise the **first EU-China working group meeting on Data Exchange, which fostered significant achievements towards stronger EU China cooperation on external trade statistics.**

Activity Description

The scope of the visits covered organisational overview at several European statistical institutions and created a more solid basis for statistical cooperation between China and EU Member States. Meetings were held consecutively with **Eurostat, DDGI (France) and ISTAT (Italy).** Delegates from GACC saw in practice benefits from best EU legal practices regulating cooperation between Member States statistical bodies and other customs departments. The delegates were also trained on the operational details of COMEXT, the statistics EU database system, and its query parameters.

11 Chinese delegates attended the study tours from the central government customs administration and regional customs statistics departments.

Results

A key outcome of the visit was establishing the first working group meeting on EU-China Foreign Trade Data Exchange, with experts agreeing to sign a finalised action plan for external trade data exchange during the next high level EU-China dialogue.

Overall, the study visit increased delegates' awareness of best EU practices in the organisation and methodology of external trade statistics, and both Chinese and EU experts showed readiness for setting up long-term systems for statistical cooperation. In addition, the study visit strengthened both the EU and China's focus on committing to a data exchange mechanism that would allow them to submit more reliable bilateral statistical figures in the future.