C.2. Timeliness

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20.14.   Timeliness in data dissemination is one of the recommended quality dimensions and should be fully taken into consideration when developing the release schedule. The delays in time between data collection and publication should be monitored, as well as how the release of those data fit with the release of related data, such as BOP and national accounts.[1]

20.15.   When disseminating data, there is usually a trade-off between timeliness, on the one hand, and reliability, accuracy and the level of detail of published data, on the other. To help in making relevant decisions, compilers should consider user requirements (e.g., discussing trade-offs with major user groups and making decisions public) and the timing of the collection of initial and revised data from various sources.

20.16.   Compilers are advised to publicly post, for example on the website of the national agency responsible for the dissemination of the official trade statistics, before the beginning of each year, an advance release calendar of data with precise dates at which they will be released and possibly revised. It is also good practice to inform users about the availability of such calendars, using all appropriate means of communication. In addition, to improve timeliness in the dissemination of statistics on the international supply of services, it is good practice to publish on a regular basis the provisional estimates of totals, as well as breakdowns by major service categories and main partners (see section C.1 for more details), soon after the end of the reference period. Such estimates, by their nature, would be based on relatively limited data content and should be replaced by more accurate, but less timely, figures at a later date. Users must be aware of the trade-off between quality (size of revisions) and timeliness (e.g., it is generally not a good practice to publish large revisions frequently), and quality aspects need to be taken into account when deciding on the frequency of publication.

20.17.   Compilers are encouraged to issue, as relevant, the first releases of resident/non-resident trade in services data as follows: (a) monthly totals within 45 days after the end of the reference month, at least by main categories of services and, if possible, by major trading partner, (b) quarterly data within one quarter after the reference period and (c) annual data generally within six to nine months after the reference period. The release of certain data sets, such as annual FATS, can be extended.

20.18.   In addition, compilers are advised that data for the fourth quarter (or for the twelfth month) must be compiled and disseminated in their own right, and should not be derived as the difference between the annual totals and the sum for the first three quarters (or 11 months), in order to provide undistorted data for all months and quarters.

20.19.   Regarding coherence among monthly, quarterly and annual data, countries should ensure that additivity is always present, possibly by systematic automated checks. In the case of non-additivity, compilers should make available the reasons underlying it in the metadata or explanatory notes.

Next: C.3. Statistical confidentiality

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[1] See *BPM6 Compilation Guide*, para. 17.4.