International Financial Statistics USers Guide

INTRODUCTION

The International Financial Statistics (IFS) Database and Browser on CD-ROM is a product of the International Monetary Fund. It is based on the printed copy of the IFS that is published monthly. Data sets are contained for most Fund members, as well as for Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles.

The browser provides an easy-to-use Windows interface for browsing the database, selecting series of interest, displaying the selected series in a spreadsheet format and saving the selected series for transfer to the following other software systems:

Formula One (.vts)

Excel 97 (.xls)

Tabbed Text (.txt)

HTML (.htm)

Excel 5/95 (.xls)

It should be noted that the entire database cannot be exported from the Browser. However, the IFS.new file contains the entire database in text file format. **This file and related documentation are available upon special request from the EDRS.**

Three complementary views for browsing the database are included:

(1) a table view corresponding to the tables contained within the IFS publication.

(2) an economic concept view that provides access to similar concepts across countries, to the extent that they exist.

(3) a view based on the structure of the time series codes.

WARNING: Prior to using this program, please make sure that you go to the Options tab and click the Restore Defaults button, as a precaution. This is incase any previous user has saved their configuration   of   constraints.

STARTING UP

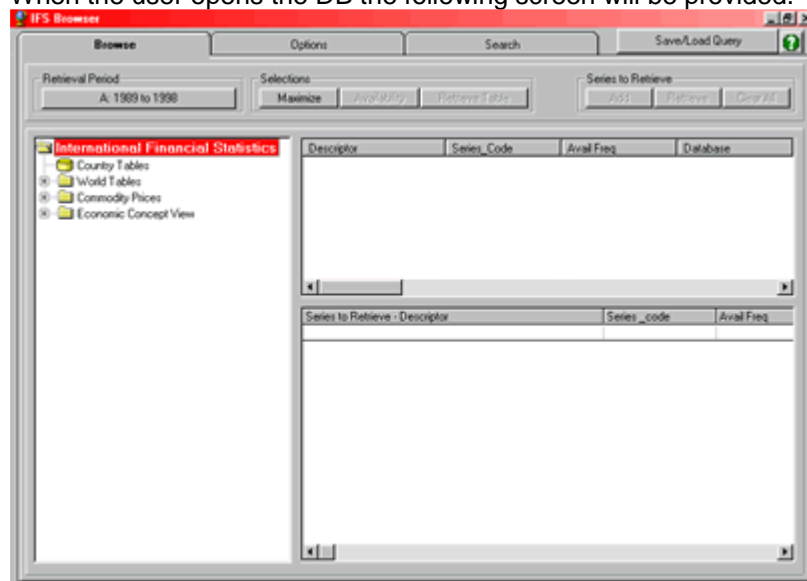When the user opens the DB the following screen will be provided.

Figure 1

Note that there are three tab keys:

Browse – Used to browse the IFS database by selecting countries and/or topics.

Options – Provides a series of options for the user by which to restrict searches, alter the format of the output etc.

Search – Provides the user with an alternate means of accessing the database, using the structure of the time series codes or names.

BROWSE

Directory tree

The far left-hand box in the Browse section contains a directory tree.

A folder icon can be further expanded by double clicking it, which will cause the next level of the tree for this item to be displayed beneath it, and so on, for each level in the tree.

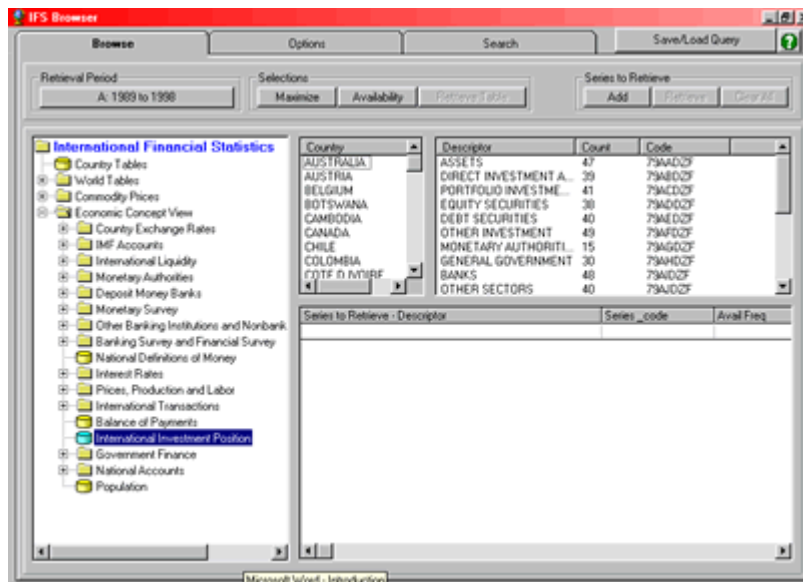The lowest level groupings of time series in the tree are represented with a database icon.

Figure 2

When an entry in the directory is proceeded by a database icon (cylinder), this signifies either

(i) a cross-country grouping of series or

(ii) a grouping in a standard presentation that may be selected and combined with series from other sources.

Clicking on such an entry will cause a selection box or boxes to the upper right of the tree display to be filled with information about this group of time series, from which individual time series or groups of series may be selected.

The icon changes color (from yellow to blue) to indicate which item in the tree has been selected.

The first three items in the top level of the directory tree, **Country Tables**, **World Tables** and **Commodity Prices** provide access to the data via presentation tables (similar to the Country Tables or World and Area Tables found in the printed IFS publication).

Country Tables provide data for 248 countries. You select a country from the pull-down list. You can retrieve a table into a spreadsheet (using the retrieval procedures described below).

The fourth top-level entry in the directory tree, **Economic Concept View**, provides a high-level summary of the data contained in IFS. This view allows the retrieval of similar concepts across a number of countries, to the extent that they exist.

NOTE:

Due to differences in the way countries define and compile statistics, not all concepts are fully comparable across all countries.

Country Tables is a database icon. The **World Tables**, **Commodity Prices** and **Economic Concept View** icons are directory trees. They open to expose a series of other database and tree icons.
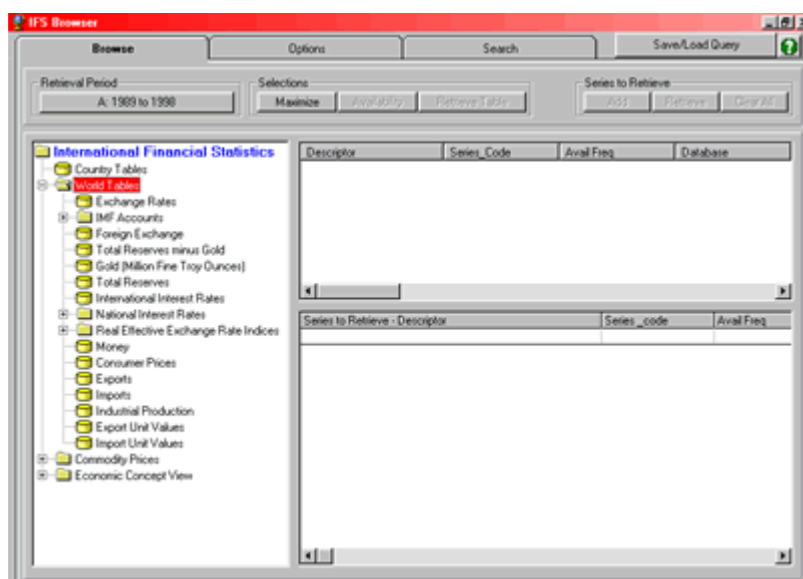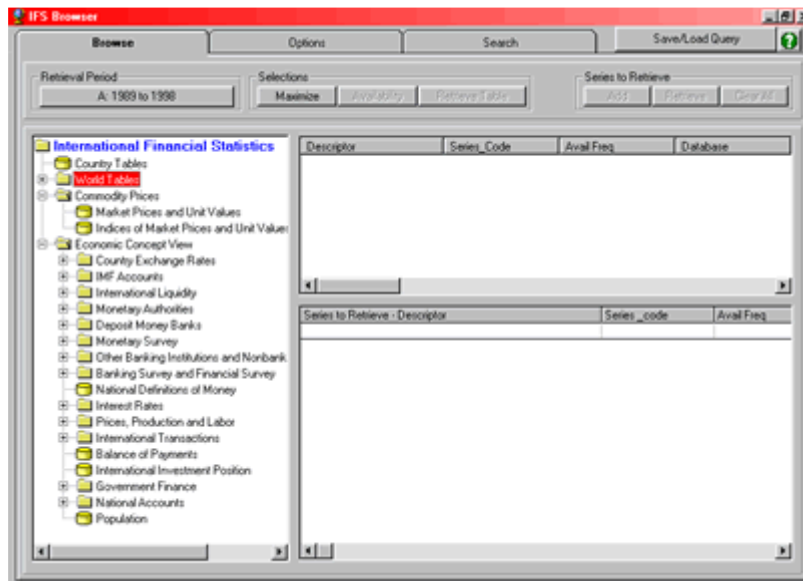
Figure 3

Figure 4

Since the IFS database covers multiple countries, two boxes will appear in the upper right area of the browser window, one with a list of countries (and/or aggregates) and the other with a list of economic concepts.

Multiple selections may be made from the **Economic Concepts** box by pressing the Ctrl key while clicking on items. An entire block of items may be selected by clicking on the first item in the desired block and then by pressing the Shift key while clicking on the last item in the block.

Predefined or personal groups of countries may be selected by right-clicking within the country selection box and selecting **Show Country Groups.**

♠
Retrieving an Entire Table

For the **Country Table, World Table,** and **Commodity Prices** views, select a database icon and the **Retrieve Table** button (under selections) will show.

Click this button to retrieve an entire table into the spreadsheet as a formatted table, which can be edited and saved.

For certain topical areas under **Economic Concept View**, such as **Balance of Payments** and **Government Finance Statistics**, the table frames (e.g., country pages) include the full list of possible concepts for the topic. This does not mean that all concepts listed in the table exist for every country. When a table is retrieved, there may be rows for which only the time series code and table descriptor exist; this means that the time series does not exist for the country selected.

♠
Retrieving Individual Series
(only for **Economic Concept View)**
Select a database icon (it will change from yellow to blue)
Highlight the desired countries and economic concepts in the upper right selection boxes.
Click the **Add** button (under **Series**) to select individual series.
This will cause the selected series to be added to the **Series to Retrieve** box in the lower right portion of the screen.
These series may be combined with series from another desired entry in the tree directory in the same way.
Once all the desired series have been selected and placed in the **Series to Retrieve** box and the period setting for the retrieval adjusted, all the series in the **Series to Retrieve** box may be transferred to the spreadsheet by clicking on the **Retrieve** button.
To Delete a series
To delete an individual series from the **Series to Retrieve** box, highlight the unwanted series and press the delete key.
To delete a group of series, press the Ctrl key while clicking on items, then press the delete key.
To delete a continuous block of series, click on the first item in the block, press the Shift key while clicking on the last item in the block, then press the delete key.

To delete all series in the **Series to Retrieve** box, click on the **Clear all** button in the **Series to Retrieve** group.
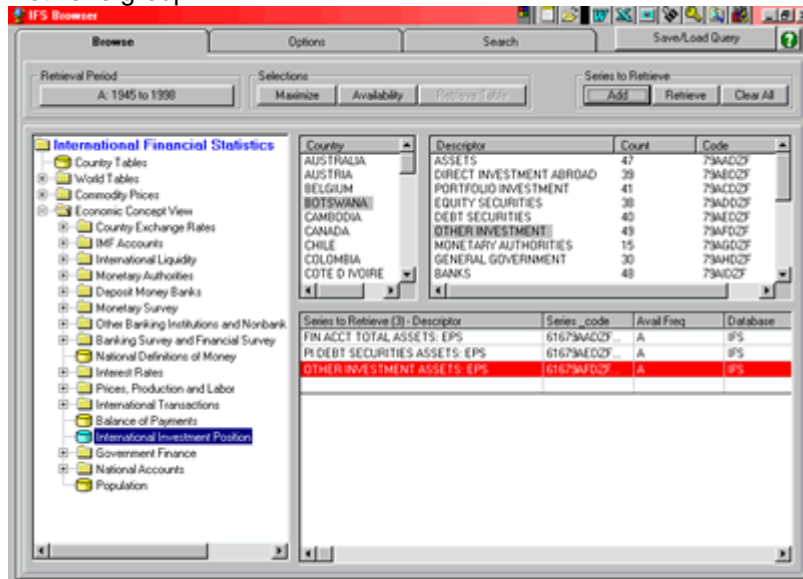

Figure 5

♠
Maximizing
Under the **Selections** section, there is a **Maximize** button. Clicking on this will cause the two top right boxes to be enlarged for a better view. ♠
Availability
Click on the **Availability** button to find out which specific time series concepts exist for which countries.
If the **Availability** button is clicked while no selections have been made in either the **country selection** box or the **concept selection** box, then the entire availability matrix will be displayed, with all countries for which any of the concepts exist appearing in the first column and the time series concept codes appearing in the first row. An "x" at an intersection of a country row and concept column indicates that the series exists.
If one or more countries or one or more concepts are selected (highlighted in the country or concept selection boxes) then the availability of only the selected countries and/or codes will be displayed in the availability matrix, making it easier to narrow in on the countries/concepts of interest.
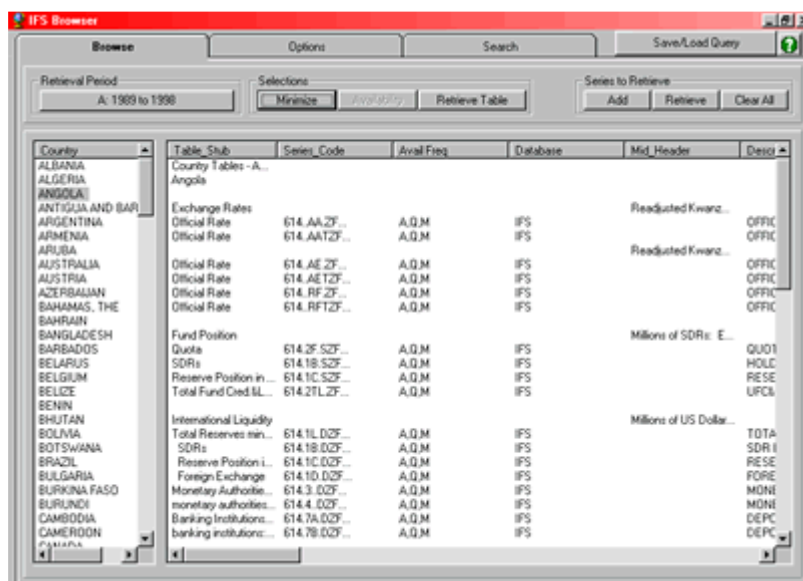
Figure 6

↑
Retrieval Period

The retrieval period button allows the set up of
Frequency settings
Singe
Multiple
Frequency
Annual
Quarterly
Monthly
Start and End Period

Figure 7
To select a retrieval period containing dates of more than one frequency, click on the **Multiple Frequency** setting. The retrieval period dialog will expand to include additional boxes for specifying the order of the dates and to display the period setting for each frequency.
For each frequency of dates to be included in the retrieval period, select the desired frequency, start and end period and years as above and click on the **Add** button.
The **Freq. Orde**r setting determines whether dates will be arrayed from Low to High frequency (e.g., annual, quarterly, and monthly) or High to Low (e.g., monthly, quarterly, and annual). By default, dates are arranged by frequency, starting with the lowest frequency, e.g. annual.
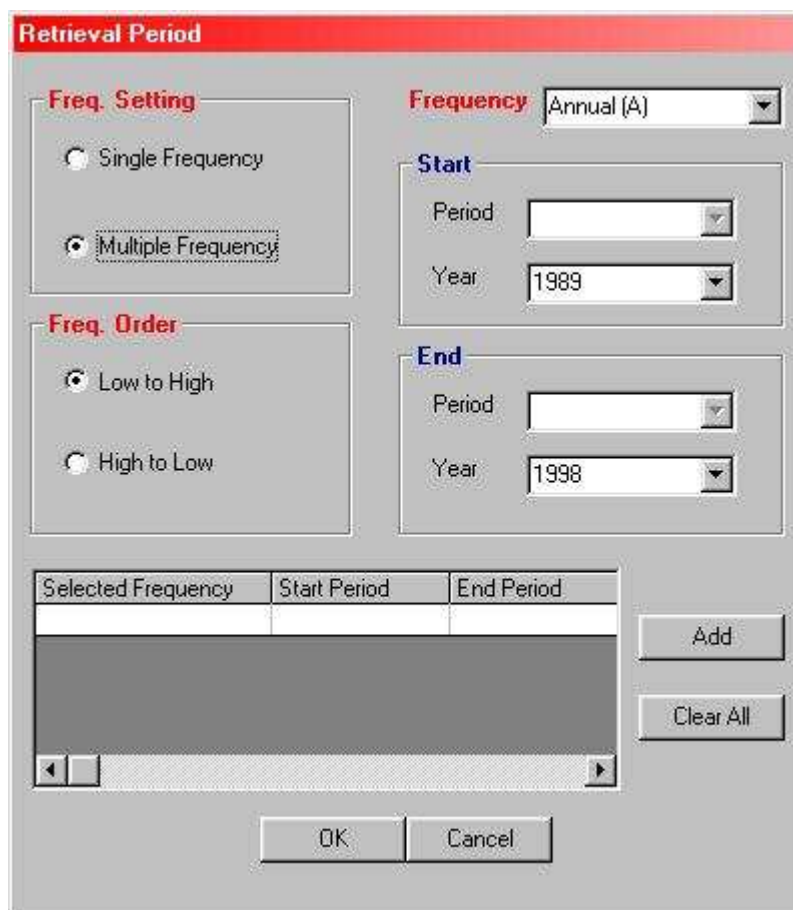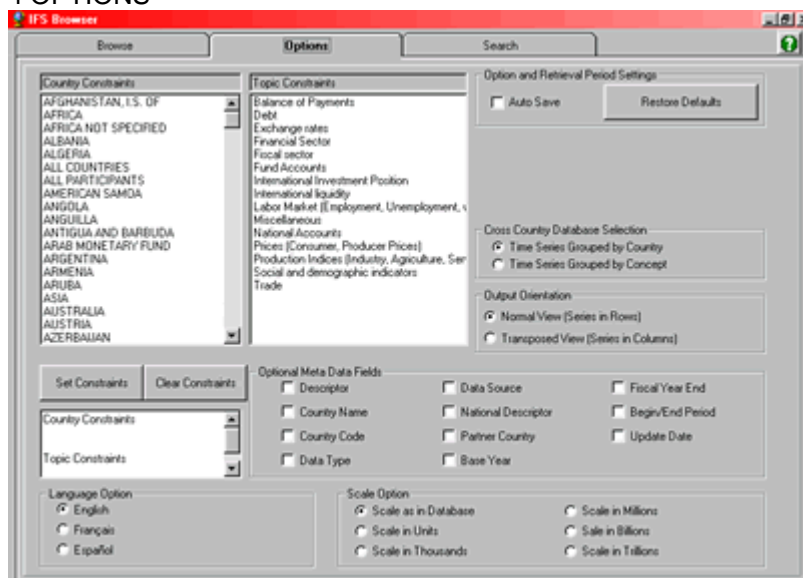
Figure 8

4 OPTIONS

Figure9

The following options are available to control the browsing and retrieving of data:
Constraining the Display of the Directory
Auto Saving Settings
Transposed Output Orientation
Ordering Series from the Economic Concept View
Selecting Metadata Fields
Scaling Observation Values
Selecting the Language

WARNING: Prior to using this program, please make sure that you go to the Options tab and click the Restore Defaults button, as a precaution. This is in-case any previous user has saved their configuration of constraints. ✦

Constraining the Display of the Directory Tree

The presentation of the IFS directory tree can be limited to specific countries or specific sectoral topics by setting constraints on the Options Tab.

Select one or more of the countries listed in the **Country Constraint** box and/or one or more sectors in the **Topic Constraint** box

Click on the **Set Constraint** button. This will cause the current constraints to appear in the box directly below the **Country Constraint** box.
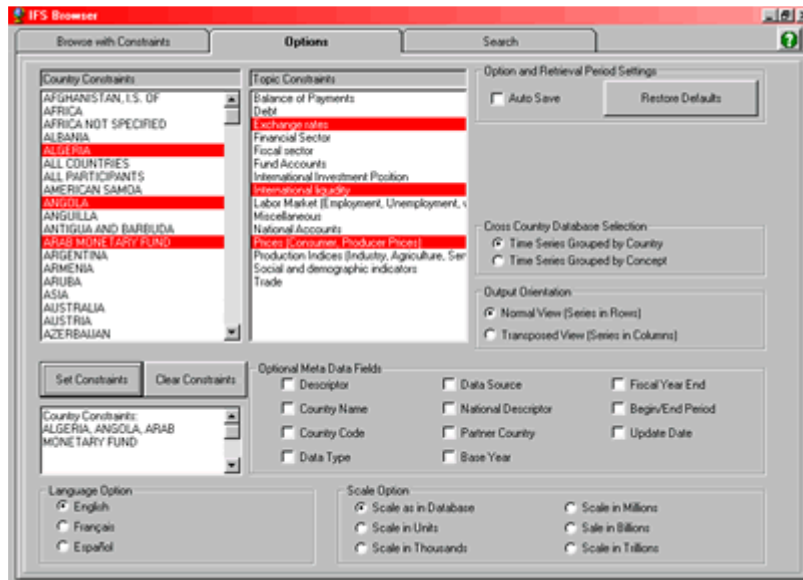

Figure 10

If constraints have been set, then the label of the **Browse** tab will change to "Browse - with Constraints" as a reminder when browsing the database directory, that only a subset of the directory is displayed.

All constraints may be removed by clicking on the **Clear Constraints** button on the **Options** tab. This will return the label of the "Browse - with Constraints" Tab to "Browse", its default setting. Setting Constraints can be a useful way of narrowing in on the data that is desired for one or more countries and/or sectors.

✦
Auto Saving Settings and Restoring Default Settings

To automatically retain all changes to option and retrieval period settings in future sessions, check the **Auto Save** box under **Option and Retrieval Period Settings**. When this box is checked, any changes made to either option settings on the **Options** tab or the retrieval period on the **Browse** tab will be automatically saved and retained for future sessions.

To restore the default option and retrieval period settings, click on the **Restore Defaults** button under the **Option and Retrieval Period Settings**.

To customize the initial retrieval period and option settings that will be in effect at the beginning of each session, check the **Auto Save** box, make any additional desired option or retrieval period setting changes and uncheck the **Auto Save** box.

✦
Transposed Output Orientation

The default output orientation for retrieved data is to place the requested dates and the data for each time series in a row.

Instead, to place the requested dates and data for each time series in a column, check the **Transposed** box under **Output Orientation**. While this box is checked, clicking on the **Retrieve** button will cause a transposed table to be created.

NOTE:

that the **Transposed** option has no effect when retrieving an entire table using the **Retrieve Table** button on the **Browse** Tab. When more than 256 time series are requested with a transposed orientation, because of spreadsheet's limit of 256 columns in a single sheet, the first 256 series will be placed in the first sheet, with the remaining series placed in one or more other sheets, as necessary.

✦
Ordering Series from the Economic Concept View

Within the **Economic Concept View**, the order in which multiple countries series can be selected is controlled through the **Cross Country Database Selection**.

This is changed by choosing one of the two grouping options. By default, series will be grouped by country: all the series for the first country will be listed, followed by all the series for the second country, and so on.

If the **Grouped by Concept** option is selected, then series will be grouped in the opposite order: all the countries for the first time series concept will be listed, followed by all the countries for the second time series concept, and so on.

NOTE:

This option affects the order in which series are added to the series to retrieve box. It does not affect the order of series already contained within the series to retrieve box.

Selecting Metadata Fields

Metadata is information about a time series contained in separate fields that are mapped to fields in the underlying database (for more information, click on the question mark icon in the top right corner and look up 'metadata').

A variety of metadata fields exist in the database. The fields that are retrieved in the spreadsheet may be controlled by checking off the desired fields in the **Optional Meta Data Fields** box.

Clicking on a field that has already been checked will cause it to be de-selected.

To see the extent to which the metadata fields are present, simply scroll horizontally through the metadata fields in the **Series to Retrieve** box (lower right). Within the **Country Tables View**, these fields may also be viewed in the **Selection Box** containing economic concepts.

Scaling Observation Values

The scaling of observations to be retrieved in the spreadsheet may be adjusted by selecting the desired choice within the **Scale Option** box. This allows data values retrieved to be stored and displayed with a common magnitude, e.g., units, thousands, millions, billions or trillions.

The value of the Scale metadata field is also changed accordingly, to match the scale in which the data is actually stored and presented within the spreadsheet. No scaling is applied to the observation values of series that are identified as index numbers, growth rates, percent changes, etc.

If no scale option is specified in the **Scale Options** box, then by default, the magnitude of the series as specified in the underlying IFS database will generally determine the scaling that is applied to the observation values (Format as in Database option).

The only exception to this is when an IFS Country Table is retrieved by clicking on the **Retrieve Table** button. In this case, the **Format as in Database** scaling option will result in observations for each time series being scaled according to the magnitude stored with the country table presentation, if different from that stored with the time series in the database.

Selecting the Language

The browser user interface has only been installed in **English**. Hence selecting another language is not possible.

5 SEARCH

Searching IFS Database Using Time Series Codes

To Search the IFS database using time series codes (time series names):

Click on the **Search** tab

Select a country from the drop-down list or according to the Naming Conventions for IFS Time Series.

NOTE:

For the guide to naming conventions for the IFS time series please refer to the help section (question mark icon on top right corner).

Click on **Search** button to return list of time series matching the specification.
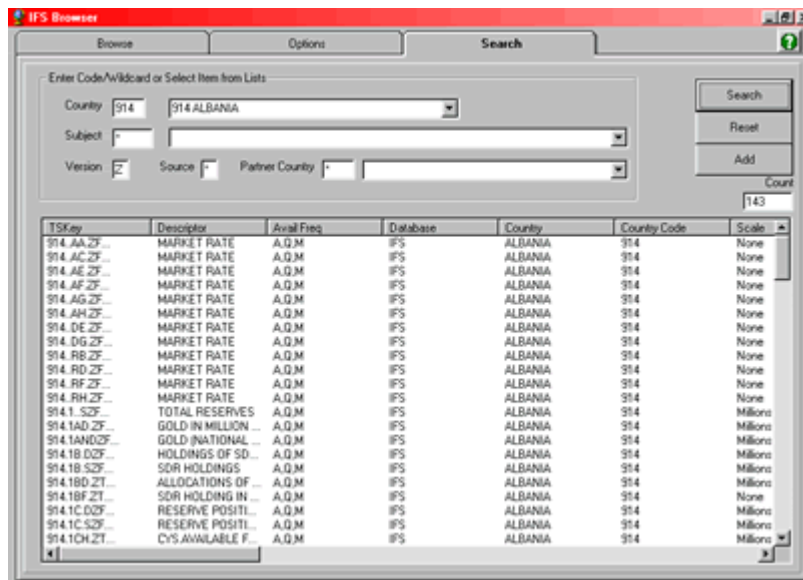
Figure 11
To narrow down by subject, select a subject (from drop-down menu or subject code) and click **Search** again.
Select the desired series within the list of found series (if list is empty then the requested series does not exist).
Click on **Add** to add the series to the **Series to Retrieve** box on the **Browse** tab.
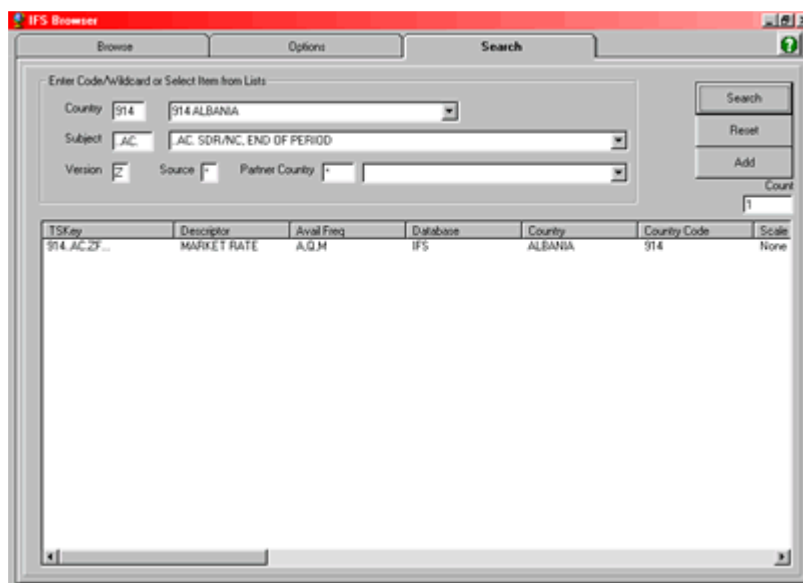

Figure 12
To reset the time series key sub-fields to their default values and to clear the list of found series, click on the **Reset** button. No more than 5,000 series can be loaded into the series found box at a time. If more than 5000 series match the time series key wildcard specification, then only a count of the number of found series will be returned, as an aid in refining the search.