

TASK FORCE ON SERVICES STATISTICS

Report on a Preliminary Consultation

(20 May 1994 at the OECD in Paris)

1. This preliminary consultation followed the scheduled meeting of the OECD Ad Hoc Experts Group on Trade in Services. Representatives of international organisations who attended the Expert Group meeting stayed to exchange views in preparation for the first meeting of the Task Force. The consultation was convened by Mr. Kincannon, Chief OECD Statistician, following the decision of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations at its Special Session of 11-15 April 1994 to set up an Inter-Agency Task Force on Services Statistics.
2. The consultation was chaired by Mr. Kincannon and was attended by:
 - Mr. I. Bové from the International Monetary Fund
 - Mr. C.A.P. Braga from the World Bank
 - Mr. G. Karsenty from GATT
 - Mr. J.-C. Roman from EUROSTAT
 - Mr. N. Vanston from OECD-ECO
 - Mr. N. Sakurai from OECD-STI
 - Mr. P. Hill from OECD-STD
 - Mr. D. Blades from OECD-STD
 - Mr. E. Veil from OECD-STD
 - Ms. A. Chadeau from OECD-STD
 - Ms. J. Owens from OECD-STD
3. The consultation was based on the draft agenda reproduced in Annex I (which was adopted) and on informal contributions by the IMF, the World Bank, GATT, UNCTAD and the OECD.
4. The discussion of Point 2 of the agenda (**Terms of Reference of the Task Force**) focused on the OECD draft (whose modified version is reproduced in Annex II with the changes underlined).
5. There was a consensus that the main objective of the Task Force should be to strengthen the co-ordination of work undertaken by international institutions. This should be achieved by sharing information on the activities of the institutions dealing with services statistics, and by identifying priorities, duplications, and gaps. It was recommended that the Task Force should not itself undertake substantive work, but promote projects aimed at developing international standards, systems and classifications of service statistics, and at improving the methods of their compilation. The role of the Task Force should essentially be that of a facilitating body.
6. In line with the Statistical Commission's recommendation there was also agreement that priority should be given to international trade in services, whose coverage could be defined initially with reference to the GATS. The expansion of the scope of the Task Force to other kinds of service statistics could be decided at a later stage.
7. Technical assistance to developing countries for the improvement of their services statistics was also considered to be a possible objective.
8. Under Point 3 (**Relationship between the Task Force and other Groups concerned with Service Statistics**) the issue of the membership of the Task Force was discussed. It was agreed to approach other international institutions that might be interested, such as regional United Nations bodies. The view was also expressed that the composition of Task Force meetings might vary depending on the subjects under consideration.

9. The discussion of Point 5 (**Initial Work Programme**) which was based on an OECD draft, revealed preference for establishing an inventory of the activities of international institutions in the service statistics area. Such a stock-taking was regarded as an indispensable first phase of the Task Force's work. An important aspect of this operation was to ensure that the results become available at the world level. On the basis of the conclusions from the stock-taking the drafting of a Manual, a Compilation Guide and a Handbook could be examined.
10. Mr. Kincannon concluded by stating that the results of this consultation will be reported to the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the United Nations and that the first meeting of the Task Force itself will be convened in the near future.

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TASK FORCE ON SERVICE STATISTICS

First Meeting
7-8 July 1994 at the OECD,
beginning at 10:30 the first day

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Discussion of the report on the preliminary consultation
- Draft by OECD
3. Exchange of views on the terms of reference of the Task Force
- Draft by OECD
4. Relationship between the Task Force and the Groups on Service
Statistics
5. Initial work programme of the Task Force
- Draft by OECD
6. Other business
7. Next meeting.

ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities

Task Force on Service Statistics

Proposed Terms of Reference

1. The general objectives of the Task Force are:
 - a) to strengthen co-operation between international organisations in the area of services statistics; to liaise with other agencies or groups involved with services statistics; *Voorburg.*
 - b) to promote the development of international standards, systems and classifications for service statistics;
 - c) to ~~review and seek~~ ^{to} ways of improving the availability, quality and international comparability of service statistics collected at international level;
 - d) to ~~facilitate~~ ^{to} the provision of technical assistance in services statistics to developing countries.
2. Priority will be given initially to statistics of international trade in services as understood in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and also possibly other transactions between residents and non-residents.
3. Work on other kinds of service statistics, such as statistics of production and employment in service industries, will be given a lower priority initially.

These proposed terms of reference take account of views expressed at the preliminary consultation held at the OECD on 20 May 1994.

OECD: 3 June 1994

ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities

Task Force on Services Statistics

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

For the first phase of activities of the Task Force, the following projects may be considered:

1. The establishment of an inventory of the activities ^(and requirements) of international institutions in the service, statistics area
2. The creation of a Manual and a Compilation Guide for international trade in services ^(international trade in) setting out guidelines for coverage, classifications, definitions, methods of compilation, etc.
3. The development of a Handbook of international trade-in-services statistics providing a comprehensive collection of national statistical data and their underlying methodology.