

## AUSTRIA

Progress Report to the 18th meeting of the Voorburg Group in Tokyo, 6-10<sup>th</sup> October 2003

### **1- The main achievements of the country or organization for the recent period 2002-2003;**

#### PPI for Business Services

A Producer Price Index (PPI) for business services is not available in Austria. Therefore Statistics Austria participate in European-wide programmes since 2002 and started a Pilot Project in October 2002 granted by Eurostat in order to undertake the preparatory work of developing PPIs for a number of business services. The programme which is planned to take place in several phases in principle covers the whole range of business service activities according to NACE categories 50 to 74. At the same time Statistics Austria joined the Eurostat/OECD TF whose major aim is to develop the methodological and conceptual basics of service price indices in the business sector. Statistics Austria has so far started with preparatory work on the following activities:

ÖNACE 62.1 scheduled air transport services.

ÖNACE 64.1 post and courier services

ÖNACE 74.11 legal services

ÖNACE 74.4 advertising services

For all four sectors the major basic data (structure of market, major suppliers of services, specification of services, pricing method, stratification and sampling) have been investigated. Price collection have not yet started but is going to commence in autumn 2003. First index series to be expected during 2004.

#### Sales by services products

In the context of the EUROSTAT project "Business services – Methodological development and harmonized data collection" Austria has taken part in the second phase on data collection for computer services (division 72 of NACE) for the reference year 2001. Beside the yearly SBS-surveys the computer services survey 2001 facilitates a more in depth analysis of the computer services sector. The preparatory work (survey concept, questionnaires, definitions, technical infrastructure) was carried out from November 2001 to March 2002. The paper questionnaires were sent by postal mail to the enterprises by mid of April 2002. Data collection was closed mid of July 2002. In compliance with the new statistical system for SBS in Austria the data collection was concentrated on enterprises with 5 and more persons employed. 591 enterprises were in the sample representing 63.2 per cent of turnover of the whole population. The response rate at the closing date for data transmission to Statistics Austria was about 25 per cent. The reminder by telephone raised the response rate to about 40 per cent. Data editing and data validation was carried out from July 2002 to end of August 2002. Final results were transmitted to EUROSTAT on 20th June 2003. National accounts and the branch organisation were the most interested user groups.

### **2- The main issues and challenges facing the country or organization;**

#### PPI for Business Services

For the data collection we do not expect serious problems in the field of scheduled air transport services of persons (stratification and sampling very clear), similar with postal

services and advertising services (as far as placement is concerned). For courier services, non-scheduled air transport services (especially freight), legal services and advertising services (creation) the data situation and the willingness of enterprises to cooperate is much more complicated, model pricing will be necessary.

The progress of work will be rather slowly due to budgetary reasons (presently only one person is working in the project), more resources can only be expected as soon as the amended EU regulation on STS is released.

A major challenge is to ensure the willingness of enterprises to co-operate because the Austrian circumstances do not oblige them by law to give information. This means a high amount of effort (time, money, etc.) has to be spent to convince producers of services to support the project.

Sales by services products

An extension of surveys to other service sectors is unlikely, at present any participation in future surveys on computer services cannot be assured for budgetary reasons (gentlemen agreements projects are difficult to finance).

### **3- The priorities of the work program for the next years**

PPI for Business Services

It is intended to follow the priority list of the OECD/Eurostat TF on service prices at moderate speed (priority 1 issues are e.g. computer services, road freight transport services, auditing and tax consultancy services, business consulting services, architectural and engineering services, etc.).

Sales by services products

At present participation in future projects cannot be assured for budgetary reasons.

### **4- Future topics which are of interest to the Voorburg Group for inclusion in the next program.**

PPI for Business Services

Advertising services – creation

Educational services