

IMPROVEMENTS IN SERVICE STATISTICS, DESIRED BY USERS.

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In April 1988 Statistics Sweden organized a seminar on services statistics in cooperation with The Swedish Coalition of Service Industries. Some twenty user representatives from government agencies, universities, enterprises and enterprise organisations participated.

At the seminar each participant was asked to present the three improvements in service statistics she/he consider most desirable.

The following improvements were suggested by the participants.

Investments in immaterial assets.

The improvement most frequently asked for concerned statistics on immaterial investments. The concept of investment should be broader. Investments in research and development, investments in education and skills and investments in new markets should be included. Investments other than in tangible assets account for at least the same sum as investments in tangible assets. (According to Swedish investment statistics, in 1987 investment in immaterial assets by enterprises in manufacturing with 500 or more employees were SEK 30.5 billions and investment in tangible assets SEK 29.7 billions.) In the service sector, investments in immaterial assets should be relatively more important than in manufacturing, depending on the limited investments in tangible assets in the service industries.

There is a need of a broader investment concept to get a fair comparison between investments in manufacturing and service, and to calculate total investments.

The idea that Statistics Sweden should act to get a broader definition of investment accepted in enterprise bookkeeping was presented. If the bookkeeping rules were changed, a more stable basis for enterprise reporting would be obtained and the quality of statistics on immaterial investment would improve.

Markets.

Statistics on markets and how markets develop were asked for by several participants. For enterprise planning and for academic research information on markets is essential. It is vital that market shares are calculated in a meaningful and homogeneous way.

- statistics and adequate standards are needed to calculate market shares.

- both consumption (consumption-spot) and production (production-establishment) should be given priority in statistics.

- a study on customers to service enterprises was asked for to increase the knowledge about how services are traded .

International comparisons.

The importance of internationally comparable statistics on services was stressed by several participants. Some of the reasons were that services are included in the Uruguay-round and that it is the service sector that expands, also internationally. In the GATT-negotiations it is important that services are similarly defined. But some flexibility is desirable, depending on the grey-zone of services in, for instance, manufacturing. The boundaries between the sectors for production of services and production of goods are often vague.

Trade in services.

International comparability was stressed for statistics on exports and imports of services. All participants who wanted statistics on trade in services pointed out that it is very important to have statistics not only on the trade that is passing borders. In negotiations it is extremely important to have figures on local production in foreign countries carried out by subsidiaries or in joint ventures and on the effects that this production have on the foreign country and the country of origin.

The definition of "trade in services" was mentioned. It was proposed that Sweden should assist in the work to develop guidelines and models. It is primarily developing countries that have expressed needs for such models.

Swedish statistics on trade in services, acceptable to all, was asked for. Today there are two separate sets of statistics, one based on payment data from the National Bank (Riksbank) and one based on enquiries to enterprises and produced by Statistics Sweden. The following requirements on statistics on service trade were formulated:

- Service trade should be registered in such a way as to get consistency with trade in goods. That means that overlapping and gaps between the delimitation of goods and services should be avoided.

- It should be possible to link statistics on foreign trade to statistics on both production in subsidiaries abroad and on domestic production both in domestic and in foreign owned companies. Such links are more important for services than for goods, depending on the higher degree of local production in services.

- It should be feasible to analyse the figures on trade in services "passing the border" parallelly to statistics on production in subsidiaries abroad.
- The distribution of production inside the country on production in domestic and foreign owned companies is important for studies of the structure of exports and imports and of the production and employment in the country.
- A disaggregation of trade in services by countries was asked for. In international trade negotiations it is important to know to which countries exports are going and from which countries imports are received.

Productivity in the service sector.

Improvements in the statistics on productivity in the service sector were asked for by many of the participants. It is a important requirement if the statistics are to reflect the reality. Changes in productivity in the service sector as a whole should be of tremendous importance as service sector in many countries account for the main part (in Sweden over 60 %) of GNP. New measures which take care of the specifics of services have to be developed, and it is also desirable to find better methods than the productivity model used in the national accounts for the public sector and often also for the finance sector.

Statistics on small enterprises.

Some participants expressed need for extended statistics on small enterprises (enterprises with less than 20 employees). The private service sector is dominated by small enterprises and in Sweden the potential for growth is found among those enterprises.

- These statistics should show the number of new enterprises started and the growth of the enterprises.
- Regional aspects are essential in such statistics.
- The statistics ought to serve as a framework to a business tendency survey for small enterprises.

Agents of change?

Industry and economy are changing continuously. Statistics reflect the society of yesterday rather than the society of today. The funds for agricultural statistics were mentioned as example of this.

To map the mechanisms that govern the development and produce statistics on those mechanisms should be an important task.

It was stressed that it is the preferences of the customers that guide the economic development, not the production capacity. So it should be more important to have statistics on the preferences of customers and on the changes in their preferences than to have statistics on the production capacity in manufacturing. At present manufacturing is covered by statistics.

Besides, education is one of the most important development factors. Good statistics on education and on how the level of knowledge changes are very important.

New companies by fission.

To get a better understanding of how industries function, intermittent studies of fissions are needed. How much does the birth of new companies by lifting out new ideas or new products from existing companies, or by moving out existing departments to new companies effect the development in manufacturing and in services? Such studies could also give a better basis for time series.

Statistics on capital-stocks.

Statistics on capital stocks, changes in capital stocks, their distribution on sectors and so on were demanded as well. In Sweden the knowledge of the size of capital stocks for households and enterprises is very limited.

Information technology.

The new information technology change the conditions for all industries. To extend the knowledge about this process, there is a need for statistics on information technology.