

**A CANADIAN PROPOSAL FOR A PAPER TO BE PRESENTED
IN THE NAME OF THE VOORBURG GROUP TO THE
27TH SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

The Canadian proposal is to present a model survey - to be conducted as a pilot by a group of countries, it being agreed from the outset that the survey will embody as many elements as possible to make it internationally comparable.

No one would disagree that in some form or other, a survey of what computing services are provided to both business and households is a matter that interests policy at its highest levels. Nor would many disagree that these services are prime candidates for estimation at constant prices and that to the extent the services in question are increasingly the subject of international trade, their relevance to policies on external payments is high.

But there is at present no framework that would make such a survey comparable across countries, a test for CPC/ISIC, and a contribution to the questions that have been asked in connection with trade in services.

The specific Canadian proposal is that a group of interested countries would cooperate in producing a standard description of a survey of producers of computer services, the aim of which would be to obtain prices and quantities of CPC services sold domestically and abroad.

The easy part will be to agree on the general stages of planning, testing, carrying out and evaluating. The difficult part will be to get agreement on what the statistical unit should be, how to classify it and its outputs, what kind of questionnaire to put forward and what should be the criteria of evaluation.

These matters may form the basis of a thorough discussion when the Voorburg Group meets again.

If the proposed survey is endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission, two consequences would follow. First, there would be a commitment on the part of the survey developers to take the survey and share findings as well as analyze contributing factors to international differences. Secondly, there would be a model of a survey with supporting methodology, and hopefully systems, for countries that would eventually wish to take such a survey.

Further into the future, there would be a first essay to create a series of internationally comparable surveys of the service producing industries.

This proposal in no way compromises the possibility of surveying matters of national concern. There would be a standard core questionnaire followed by nationally interesting questions. This is the case with standard codes and national suffixes. There would also be the possibility of testing in practice differences created by differently established sampling frames, different notions of statistical units and different applications of the ISIC/CPC.