

**Plan of Action to Develop a European System  
of Enterprise Statistics on Services**

**Eurostat**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the last meeting of the Voorburg Group in Wiesbaden a short presentation of the plan of action to develop a European statistical system on services was given. This presentation was based on the "Statistical Programme of the European Communities 1989-1992", which contains a special sectoral programme "Statistics on Services" encompassing the development of a general framework for statistics on services, enterprise statistics on distributive trade, HORECA (Hotels, Restaurants, Catering) on financial services (including insurance) and Communication, Information and Other Business Services (ICOBS) as well as a statistical information system on services.

EUROSTAT is currently developing this European statistical system on services with the assistance of National Statistical Institutes in the Member Countries and under the guidance of the users, particularly in the different Directorate-Generals of the commission.

Given this background the objective of this paper is to present the state of the art regarding the development of this statistical system on services and to provide a rough sketch of future actions within the programme. The programme consists of the following parts

- Development of a manual of methodology for statistics on services
- Consolidation of existing statistics on services
- Pilot surveys on services
- Development of basic statistical tools
- Preparing regulations for a regular collection of harmonized statistics on services
- Establishing a statistical information system on services.

2. Development of a manual of methodology for statistics on services

The manual of methodology should establish a framework of reference for existing statistics on Services at national level and for additional data collection measures at the European level. This framework of reference should improve the comparability of statistical data between the different sectors of the services entity and different Member Countries, despite the diversity of service activities between the Countries according to different legal systems and practices. The manual should serve as the basic harmonization tool in the staged development of European service statistics. The manual will be published and can in that way also serve as a framework of recommendations for non-official statistics, particularly market research studies, in the services entity. Work on the manual is under way ; a preliminary version will be available at the end of the year.

3. Consolidation of existing statistics on services

Partly existing statistics on services at national level produce data according to national concepts, which are not at all comparable at European level. Therefore the Commission intends to encourage and undertake actions to improve the availability of data on services at European level and to harmonize these data according to concepts developed in the manual of methodology for statistics on services. The aim of this harmonization programme is to develop models of ranked, multistage estimations and to apply these models in the case of missing or non-fitting data within the statistical information system on services at European level (MERCURE). The bulk of work within this programme consists of practical estimation work within the different sectors of the services entity for all indicators needed and the different years selected.

The work will be started in November 1989 following the completion of the statistical information system MERCURE with data from National Statistical Institutes.

4. Pilot surveys on services

In order to improve the availability of statistical data on services the Commission intends to encourage pilot surveys in Member States, which do not have a comparable survey instrument within some sectors of the services entity. The pilot surveys should

- provide some basic statistical figures for the sectors covered
- and prepare methodologically regular surveys on the basis of European legislation

These pilot surveys will be implemented according to concepts and methods developed within the manual of methodology and will be carried out only in those parts of the services entity and in those Member Countries, where there is no statistical basis for consolidation measures.

The preparation of pilot surveys in some sectors of the services entity has already started. National statistical Institutes will receive some financial assistance from the European Community to carry out these surveys.

**5. Development of basic statistical tools**

In order to improve the available data base on services by means of consolidation and additional data collection measures on a pilot basis, some basic statistical instruments must be developed, which are not only of use for statistics on services but for a wider range of economic statistics. These tools are

- registers
- classifications
- sampling design
- questionnaire design and survey processing tools
- data analysis systems

Within the programme of work and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity these tools should be developed by selected national statistical offices for the whole European Statistical System. An initial consideration of the development of these tools has already taken place in collaboration with interested National Statistical Institutes.

**6. Preparing regulations for a regular collection of harmonized statistics on services**

On the basis of the manual of methodology for statistics on services and with the experience made in consolidating existing statistics on services and carrying out pilot surveys it will be possible to prepare the European regulations, which are indispensable in the medium term, to achieve a complete and harmonized statistical system on service activities on the basis of annual enterprise surveys. The aim is to regulate annual enterprise surveys on

- trade
- hotels, restaurants and catering

- transport
- financial services
- information and communication services, other business services.

The preparatory work will start in the second half year of 1990.

#### 7. Establishing a statistical information system on services

The information collected will be stored in a horizontal statistical information system on services (MERCURE). The basic objective is to provide all the information required for the Community policies. Therefore information system should include

- official statistics on services, collected by statistical offices of Member Countries
- data drawn from other EUROSTAT projects, related to services
- non-official data on services obtained by other departments of the Commission.

The establishment of this information system includes the creation of a production base and of different reference and dissemination bases. In order to facilitate access it is necessary to use appropriate hardware and software and to provide assistance and advice for customers.

The first phase of the establishment of MERCURE is finished. This stage was aimed at the collection of "non-harmonized" data, which were readily available from existing statistical sourcespo at national level.