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**INITIAL OUTLINE OF GUIDELINES FOR DATA
COLLECTION ON THE SERVICES SECTOR**

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Brief version of outline.

1. Introduction and background

The pilot surveys proved a great deal of practical problems related to the process of data collection. Eurostat proposes to develop a set of guidelines for data collection in order firstly to secure a harmonized implementation of the methodological manual and secondly in order to establish a set of tools to analyse the results of the data collection. The guidelines are needed for the organisation and administration of the pilot surveys, for the identification of the universe, for the collection and interpretation of the variables and for estimating the influence of the different sources and collection methods used by the member states on the contents of the collected data.

The pilot surveys have shown that even if special manuals for the different sectors have been elaborated in order to highlighten the different sectorial characteristics, it is necessary to develop a more detailed and systematic description of the variables to be used in connection with the empirical process of data collection. The existing sector manuals analyse the different variables from a *vertical* approach with each single sector as the total universe. The next step must be a *horizontal* approach comparing and perspectivating the sectorial differences of the contents of the variables defined in the general framework. Figuratively spoken a matrix with variables in the first column and subsectors in the heading illustrating on a detailed level the empirical problems met by the NSOs in the data collection process, shall be elaborated.

The guidelines for data collection would not have the same status as the methodological manual for statistics on services which also has a normative aspect. The reference guidelines for data collection would only have the objective of providing an useful background document for the management and launching of surveys in the services area.

2. Identification of the universe

The identification of the universe has proved to give very serious problems for a number of the member states as business registers with sufficient sectoral and size coverage are not available in all member states. Compared with the manufacturing industry the existence of a relatively huge number of micro enterprises in most of the services sector makes the identification of the total universe and thus the representativity of the sample difficult.

The many micro enterprises in the services sectors highlight the question of the respondent burden. One way of diminishing the respondent burden is by using data collected for other purposes than statistical production, i. e. using administrative registers as the VAT register. Thus the implications of using administrative data shall be highlighted in this paper

The paper shall deal with problems related to different sample frames:

- Business Register with full coverage
- Statistical register with a limited coverage either in sectors or in size classes
- private databases - coverage and updating unknown or questionable

3. Variables to be collected

The guidelines shall give sector specific comments to the variables presented in the methodological manual. The comments shall have the following approaches:

- Problems of comparisons between different sector as the same variable may have a different contents in different subsector, e. g. turnover
- Problems of comparisons cross countries, e. g. differences in definitions or data collection methods influencing the results or different economic structures, e. g. subcontracting of major importance in one country and not in another
- The complexity and heterogeneity of the activities within a single subsector can complicate the comparability even within the subsector
- Problems related to size/data sources. E. g. in most countries accounts data from the micro enterprises will have to be collected from administrative fiscal sources. This will influence the values of the data collected compared to the values from data collected directly from the enterprises, e. g. depreciations.

4. Data collection organisation

The guidelines shall propose a number of standardised modules to be used by the Member States on the basis of the in section 3 mentioned differences between subsectors or between micro and larger enterprises.