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Web Services: An Integral Element of OECD's dot.STAT Technology Framework for Statistical Applications

By Peter Lübkert, OECD



The combination of evolving ICT standards that increase the interoperability between applications and the ever increasing need for a more seamless access to and exchange of information is a major driver in the OECD ICT strategy in general and for the support of the OECD Statistical Strategy in particular.

OECD dot.STAT is a new development framework designed to implement the basic infrastructure for the new OECD Statistical Information System was established in 2002. The so-called dot.STAT framework incorporates a central datawarehouse and is part of a broader statistical strategy, which depends on a glossary of statistical terms and a corporate meta-data repository. Its objectives are threefold.

The first aim is to offer a single platform/repository for multiple data/meta-data sets with different characteristics. Secondly it comprises a complete set of information broker tools to make replication from working/production databases as transparent and simple as possible. Thirdly, the architecture aims to offer basic building blocks for the (re)development of statistical production systems as part of an OECD-wide Quality Framework initiative.

What is the role of "web-services" in this context? The application of the "web services" paradigm has its roots in the combination of three factors. First of all, both internal and external users of OECD statistical information typically have their preferred (or standard) data manipulation tools. Secondly, the development of a user interface, which meets "all" potential requirements is virtually impossible and would likely be very costly. And thirdly, there are emerging standards, in particular XML, SOAP, and WSDL which, in combination with already existing standards (HTTP), have great potential for improving the access to and interchanging of data in the Internet space. Another key aspect in the development of this approach is the OECD participation in the SDMX (Statistical Data and Meta Data eXchange; sponsors include the BIS, ECB, Eurostat, IMF, OECD & the UN) Case Study project, which strives to demonstrate the concept of Registry based, networked (virtual) databases.

From the more general business perspective this approach is expected to increase the coherence of ICT solutions for statistical applications in line with recommendations of the OECD Statistics Quality Framework. It should also allow further streamlining of application support and maintenance activities.

The Concept

Figure 1 illustrates the information flow in a web service scenario. The Universal Discovery and Description Integration service allows finding and locating a service following the concept of yellow pages (see Figure 2). A service provider will publish pertinent information about the content and structure of the service and offer information about how to access it.

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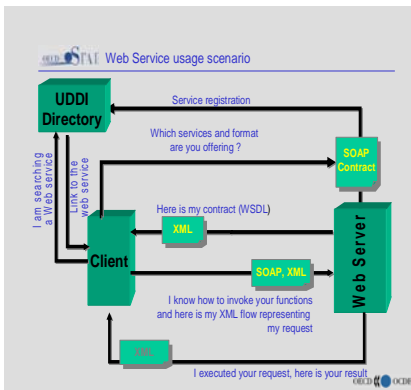


Figure 1 Web Service Flow Diagram

This information could be complemented by sample code or even re-usable applications. For more information about UDDI (or UDDI Business Registry) please refer to one of the four existing UDDI servers - IBM, Microsoft, SAP and NTT – which, with version 2 of the standard, also exchange information amongst each other. Thus a Web Service named “dotStat” under a Business named “OECD” can be found at:

Microsoft:

<http://uddi.microsoft.com/search>

IBM: <https://uddi.ibm.com/ubr/find>

NTT: <https://www.uddi.ne.jp/ubr-e/find>

SAP: https://websmp205.sap-ag.de/~form/uddi_discover/prod

Once registered, a service can be located by the “customer/client” who can connect to it directly, based on the information provided about content and usage. The application of a number of standards established through the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium – <http://www.w3.org/>) distinguishes the web service approach from traditional application programming interfaces and allows the seamless integration of the web service into existing information processing environments. All information flows between the client and the server will use XML. On the server side, the web service will communicate with the relevant data source. In the case of dot.STAT the source datawarehouse is a MS SQL-Server database with OLAP extensions, but could be another type of data store (see Figure 2).

The consumer has the choice of exploiting the service interactively or programmatically. Office productivity tools such as Excel can be used for this, as can portal software tools or more classical application programming

languages. This quite powerful concept is also illustrated in Figure 2 and was demonstrated through a successful integration test with an IMF portal application. The service provider further has the possibility to offer shrink-wrapped “applications” that work with commonly used tools. The use of a “wizard” to allow the creation of dynamic or static links from a spreadsheet into the web service is a good example of this kind of application. Experience with OECD internal clients and “wizards” has been very positive. In addition to the intuitiveness of the approach in itself, it allows the client to manipulate/adapt the formulas created by the wizard directly later on and apply them in combination with the standard functionality of the spreadsheet product used. A spreadsheet based “briefing book” is another way to offer a web service to clients who require a set of regularly updated sets of information possibly in a graphical format for analysis and reuse.

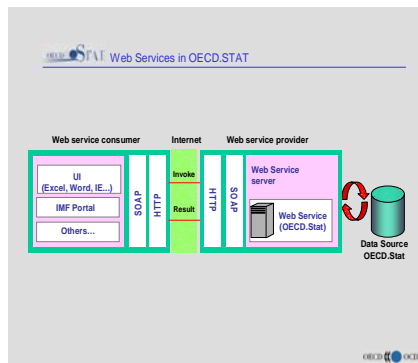


Figure 2 Web Services Architecture

The Vision

Initially this system was devised for use with well defined constituencies within the OECD or externally. Whereas the adoption and management of the web services concept internally is expected to be rather simple, there are both opportunities and challenges with external clients. By default, web services are not geared for general interactive use on the Internet. At the same time they offer the possibility to establish powerful applications, which eventually could change the common practice in statistical data exchange. Ultimately it could be envisaged to offer distributed web services that lead to significantly reducing the need for replicating data between different locations. This, in turn, could lighten the overall burden of reporting and

decrease the multiplication of efforts in making information available more seamlessly.

An essential element in this distributed (or virtual) database approach is the “Registry” paradigm. Following on from the above discussion of UDDI, it could be envisaged to substitute the UDDI Directory by a Registry that does not only contain information about a service, but would actually integrate more closely with the actual service. The Registry would contain information about services and mechanisms to connect through to the actual information service. Figure 3 shows the role of the Registry as a central hub. It is an abstract illustration of the process model behind a combined Registry/web services approach. The rendering of content can be an interactive or programmatic process as with the provision of UDDI based web services. For the programmatic access it might be appropriate to offer the possibility of channelling calls directly to the web service provider, bypassing the Registry once the initial contact has been established. This, in turn, would require the management of certain metadata in both the Registry and the web service.

The integration of web services with a Registry, which is an essential part of the SDMX initiative, heavily relies on standard setting in both the statistical and the ICT domains. It also opens up a series of questions about access and information security, performance and bandwidth, as well as feature evolution. These are, however, not issues which are specific to the Registry concept, as they also exist with UDDI based web services. Another challenge lies in the necessity to harmonise nomenclature and terminology, particularly if a web service is made available to anonymous clients.

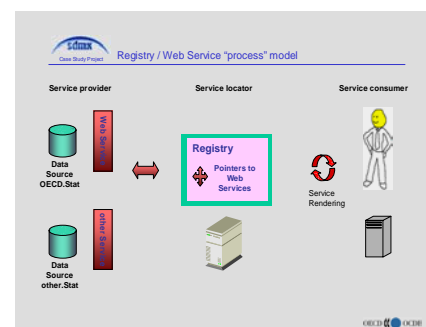


Figure 3 Registry a central hub in a distributed database environment

As part of the SDMX initiative, current efforts in the OECD focus on a feasibility study to integrate an existing web service with a Registry prototype. The project is not only meant to address some of the data exchange and transmission issues outlined above, but is also supposed to demonstrate the feasibility of mixing and matching applications developed under different environments using currently available standards.

Conclusions

The concept of web services is not per se, but offers interesting opportunities in modern applications development due to emerging standards in the Internet space. These standards, assuming that they will continue to evolve, can significantly alter the way of exchanging information, at least amongst peer organisations. The web services paradigm could help materialise ideas about more effective and less resource intensive information exchange. Major advantages of this approach/concept include:

- Less information to be replicated and reduced transmission efforts
- Opportunities to reduce reporting burden and duplication of data repositories
- Possible convergence of data dissemination and data exchange efforts

The focus of the Registry/web services idea is on the process by which well defined/structured content is made available. The dot.STAT development framework attempts to embrace this model for both access to information repositories internally and in the context of advanced international data exchange initiatives in which the OECD is involved.

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Joint OECD-CIRET Journal of Business Cycle Measurement and Analysis

By Ronny Nilsson, OECD

CIRET, the Centre for International Research on Economic Tendency Surveys, and the OECD are planning to jointly launch the new *Journal of Business Cycle Measurement and*

Analysis. CIRET is a global forum for leading economists and institutions that conduct and analyse business and consumer tendency surveys.

The aim of the new OECD/CIRET journal is the exchange of knowledge and information on theoretical and operational aspects of business cycle research. Such aspects concern both measurement and analysis.

The scope of the journal will include papers dealing with current research on:

- **Business tendency, innovation and consumer surveys.** These surveys reflecting plans, assessments and expectations are characterised mainly by qualitative type questions. Survey data provide up-to-date information on a broad range of economic activities often unavailable from quantitative statistics.
- **Composite and leading indicators.** Construction and interpretation of cyclical indicators, using data from qualitative and quantitative surveys.
- **Use of survey data or cyclical indicators** for macroeconomic and microeconomic analysis, including economic modelling, short-term economic analysis, forecasting and preparing decisions in firms, economic institutions and governments.
- **Special topics of the business cycle.** Topics considered are turning point analysis and business cycle classification, innovation and technology as driving forces of cyclical growth as well as financial indicators and monetary policy.

The journal will also publish articles from the OECD Short-term Economic Statistics Expert Group and from joint developments in economic statistics of OECD with other institutions, especially the European Commission.

The journal will regularly inform on conferences, new books and e-information within its scope and interest. The first edition of the journal is planned for September 2003 and future editions will be issued three times a year. Prof. Günter Poser, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany will be Editor in Chief and Prof. Enrico Giovannini, Director OECD Statistics Directorate and OECD Chief Statistician will chair the Editorial Board. The international

Editorial Board will consist of researchers and practitioners in all areas covered by the journal.

Since 1953, CIRET has organised international conferences that are held every other year. They provide CIRET members as well as interested researchers with the opportunity to present and discuss their latest research activities. The biennial conference is the meeting place for top scientists from all over the world and successfully integrates theoretical aspects with the perspectives of those who are primarily engaged in applying survey data. The goal is to develop consistent and applicable explanatory indicators for cyclical fluctuations and to overcome the divergence of empirical, theoretical and policy activities. Findings from the conferences until the one held in Paris in 2000 were published in conference proceedings volumes, see: <http://www.ciret.org/html/publications.htm>. A selection of conference papers from the most recent conference in Taipei in 2002, and future conferences, will now be published in the new journal.

The range of topics that have been repeatedly dealt with at CIRET conferences can be classified into the following five groups:

- Survey methods questioning, selection of respondents, processing)
- Informative value of ex ante data (analysis of accuracy)
- Use of evaluations, plans and expectations as business cycle indicators (leading indicators)
- Use of judgement data and of anticipations in econometric models
- Behaviour of businessmen and consumers in the course of the business cycle

Since the 1965 CIRET conference in Rome, the OECD has profited from research activities reported at these conferences. OECD's own research on business tendency surveys and cyclical analysis has been presented at CIRET conferences since the 1997 Munich conference. As an organisation, CIRET provides an excellent network of expertise in designing and implementing tendency surveys and in using these data for cyclical analysis. Several members of CIRET have assisted the OECD in developing its own system of leading indicators. We also ask CIRET members to take part in

our training programmes with non-member countries.

The OECD participation in the CIRET network and conferences has enabled the OECD to get access to data from business and consumer tendency surveys produced by private institutions such as confederation of industries and market research agencies in addition to survey results produced by government institutions. Survey results for OECD member countries have been published in the OECD's "Main Economic Indicators" since 1974. The OECD has with this initiative contributed to the CIRET mission by including and treating this kind of qualitative statistics on equal terms with official quantitative statistics. In addition, the OECD has produced and issued methodological information on the conduct and use of this type of qualitative information as a supplement to the OECD "Main Economic Indicators" publication. The latest product by the OECD in this field issued in 2003 was a methodological publication entitled "Business Tendency Surveys: A Handbook".

The OECD contributions to the CIRET mission have changed over the years. At first, the OECD profited from CIRET by gaining access to survey information and to the network of economists and institutions for the development of its system of composite leading indicators. Today, the OECD is also contributing to the activities of CIRET. First, the OECD is promoting the development of business and consumer surveys in transition and other non-member countries of the OECD. Second, the OECD is encouraging transition and other non-member countries to introduce a core set of standard indicators to make survey results more comparable across countries. In addition, OECD is working in close co-operation with CIRET and uses its network of experts in this work.

See our *Statistics Brief* at the following URL:

<http://www.oecd.org/oecd/pages/home/displaygeneral/0,3380,EN-document-430-15-no-13-25916-0,FF.html>

***Statistics Brief* is published by the Statistics Directorate**

U.S. Developing New Economic Indicator of Service Industry Activity

By Frederick T. Knickerbocker, U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau will introduce a new quarterly survey of service industry activity in 2004. The new Quarterly Services Survey will be the U.S. federal government's first new principal economic indicator in nearly thirty years. This new quarterly survey is the centrepiece of a multi-faceted statistical initiative to address long-standing deficiencies in federal statistics covering the service sector. Other components of this initiative will provide annual data on the product composition of service industry output and improvements in source data for computing value added for services.

The Quarterly Services Survey will utilize the 1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) definitions, and focus initially on information, communications, and technology-intensive industries. The survey will cover Information (NAICS Sector 51); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (NAICS Sector 54); and Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (NAICS Sector 56). In addition to the sector totals, the survey will produce estimates of turnover (revenue) at selected 3- and 4-digit NAICS levels. These include newspaper and software publishing; broadcasting and telecommunications; information services and data processing; computer systems design and related services; management, scientific and technical consulting; employment services; and others. Limited 5- and 6-digit NAICS industry estimates also will be available for some technology-intensive industries.

The Census Bureau will begin data collection in March 2004 to obtain information for the 1st quarter of 2004 and the 4th quarter 2003. The Census Bureau will not begin releasing data, however, until September of 2004. At that time, it will release estimates for the 4th quarter 2003 and the first two quarters of 2004. This delayed release schedule will enable the Census Bureau to "prove in" concepts and stabilize processing before disseminating data to the public. The Census Bureau will release estimates no later than 75 days after the end of the reference quarter for every quarter thereafter.

The Census Bureau will expand the survey's industry coverage to include hospitals, and nursing and residential care facilities (NAICS 622 and 623 respectively) in its second year. It will begin collection of these data for the 4th quarter of 2004 and 1st quarter of 2005, and, after a one-quarter delay in the release of these data to the public, will release data for these industries in June of 2005. Subsequent releases would follow their normal distribution schedule.

Assuming approval by Congress of a plan to expand the Quarterly Services Survey to cover most remaining service sectors, the Census Bureau will increase survey coverage during 2005 and 2006. During 2005, the Census Bureau plans to add selected transportation and finance industries (NAICS 484, 492, 493, 5231, and 5239); rental and leasing (NAICS 532); the remainder of health care and social assistance (NAICS Sector 62); Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Services (NAICS Sector 71); and Other Services (NAICS Sector 81). For these industries, the Census Bureau will collect data for the 4th quarter of 2004 and the 1st quarter of 2005, with dissemination to the public in June of 2005. During 2006, the Census Bureau plans to add Utilities (NAICS Sector 22); the remainder of transportation industries (NAICS Sector 48); the remainder of finance and insurance (NAICS Sector 52), and real estate (NAICS 531). The Census Bureau will begin disseminating these data to the public in June of 2006 with the release of information for the 4th quarter of 2005 and the 1st quarter of 2006. In addition to estimating total revenue, the Census Bureau is exploring the addition of other measures that would provide an early indication of future industry performance. The net value of new contracts awarded is one such

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<http://www.oecd.org/EN/document/0,,EN-document-notheme-15-no-11-39177-0,00.html>

measure. Analogous to manufacturers orders, service contracts awarded may be one indicator of the future health of many of these industries. The Census Bureau is carrying out research to identify and evaluate this and other possible predictive measures.

Insufficient data will exist to produce seasonally adjusted estimates for the first several years of the survey. Consequently, only unadjusted data will be produced until at least 2007. In addition, all estimates will be in current dollars. The Census Bureau will not attempt to adjust these data for changes in price levels.

The Census Bureau's Service Annual Survey will be used as the frame for the Quarterly Services Survey. It contains a certainty component of self-representing companies and a non-certainty component consisting of a sample of Federal Employer Identification Numbers associated with companies not in the certainty component. While the Service Annual Survey includes a non-employer component, the Quarterly Services Survey will cover employer firms only.

The Census Bureau was assisted in the development of its plans for this new quarterly survey by an interagency group representing the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Federal Reserve Board, the Council of Economic Advisers, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Economic Statistics Administration of the Department of Commerce.

StatWorks – an IT Toolkit for Statistical Data Management

By Trevor Fletcher, OECD

Recent evolutions in the software market, most notably the phasing out of the current version of Express software by Oracle, have made it necessary to replace a range of statistical production systems at the OECD. To respond to this, and also to future requirements, the OECD Information Technology and Network Services area are currently working with the Statistics Directorate and other directorates to develop *StatWorks*, a generic IT toolkit for statistical database management. The challenges faced by the OECD in this area could be similar to those faced by other national agencies.

In the past and in particular since the migration away from the old mainframe-based systems, OECD statistical database applications have been developed using a number of different software platforms (such as Oracle Express, Access, FAME, Microsoft SQL Server, Excel, Paradox etc.). These applications in general have been developed independently and tend not to share standards of structure, presentation or content. This has led in turn to obstacles in realising data integration projects and providing a consistent environment for horizontal analysis across different subject matters. It has also meant that staff moving to a new activity would have to become familiar with a new application interface and software environment.

The aims of the *StatWorks* toolkit are to provide a standard interface for database administrators to carry out the following tasks:

- **Database administration:** users will be able to administer their database structure and content via a centralized database management interface. This will also help eliminate duplication of data by

using corporate reference tables rather than maintaining individual collections.

- **Data collection:** For data collected using questionnaire surveys we are promoting an 'interactive questionnaire' approach. This pre-programmed Excel interface incorporates embedded validation rules that will highlight any errors entered by the respondent and provide an extra layer of data verification at the data provider end.
- **Data importing and validation:** Input files (if the interactive questionnaire has been adopted) will display any error data on arrival. In addition, standard data structures will reduce development time of parent-child hierarchy data checks. A standard application user interface will allow comparison of imported data with the previous periods input to monitor any revisions and to allow data to be corrected, validated and imported in a user-friendly manner.
- **Metadata storage and management:** Metadata can be stored in the database at all levels from cell to country level across all dimensions and an interface is provided for its management.
- **Data querying:** Data is queried via Excel spreadsheet and pivot tables for database.
- **Calculations:** A standard interface will allow users to define, view and update stored calculation rules.
- **Creating data output templates:** User-defined Excel Pivot table templates can be defined for outputting data to end-users or as input to the publication process.
- **Publication and Data dissemination.** A 'gateway' is being developed to pass user certified data via XML into the Corporate OECD dot.STAT data warehouse environment for publication and online dissemination to a wider audience.
- **Advanced data analysis:** Advanced data analysis can be carried out via standard OECD statistical software (SPSS, SAS) or other 3rd party analytical products. This is enabled by the fact that the architecture is based on SQL Server relational databases and OLAP cubes that can be easily accessed by the majority of commercially developed software tools.

- **Security management:** database administrators will have the means to manage their user profiles and data access rights to ensure that necessary security levels are in place to give staff valid permissions to update or view data.

An additional aim of the *StatWorks* project is to ensure that, where feasible, standards in IT architecture, data structure and presentation are adhered to and subsequently reduce the development cycle for new (or redeveloped) statistical database applications and to reduce the overall support burden for database applications in the future.

Development of the second phase of a pilot project to validate some of the technical approaches is currently underway with development of the production version planned to begin in July 2003.

This development can be thus considered an important step towards long-term goal of a more fully integrated environment.

Measurement of Output, Value added and GDP in Canada and the United States: Similarities and Differences

By Kishori Lal, Statistics Canada

The OECD Statistics Directorate would like congratulate our colleague Kishori Lal for the 36 years of dedicated work he has conducted on Canadian National Accounts. Kishori has always been an indefectible partner for the OECD, in particular in his permanent quest, once again exemplified by this article, for international comparability. The OECD wishes Kishori an excellent retirement.

Both Canada and the United States have comprehensive statistics on national accounts and, by and large, these are consistent with the 1993 SNA and each other. However, some differences exist. The 1993 SNA is now 10 years old and issues have emerged which require, in our judgement, a re-examination of some of its guidelines. Thus, it was decided to provide to compilers and users in both countries a fuller understanding of present practices so they can make more meaningful comparisons of the published national

accounts. This article summarises the main findings of a comprehensive report on this topic.

Both Canada and USA have identical production boundaries, which are consistent with that of the 1993 SNA with only a handful of exceptions. Both countries compile production accounts for two non-business (non-market) sectors, government and non-profit institutions serving households (NPISHs) but their individual values are not comparable. The published numbers encourage the wrong inference that there is more government and less charity in Canada compared with the United States. In reality, the values for activities limited to public administration and defence are quite similar in the two countries. The major reason for the higher value of the government sector and the correspondingly lower value of the NPISHs sector in Canada is the allocation of most non-profit institutions providing health and education services to the government sector, whereas these are allocated to the NPISHs sector in the USA.

Valuation of output and value added by industry are other areas where differences in the practices of the countries are substantial. Canada uses the 1993 SNA preferred basic price for valuing value added by industry whereas, in the United States, value added is reported at producers prices which include all sales and excise taxes levied by the various levels of governments. This convention makes the comparison of value added by industry as well as the resulting productivity estimates by industry highly problematic.

The valuation of financial services in the 1993 SNA was a major improvement over the 1968 SNA. However, some guidelines of the 1993 SNA have been found problematic and some deficient as we considered the rapid changes in the financial sector since the advent of the 1993 SNA. In the calculation of output of financial services (banks, insurance companies, other financial enterprises), there are two major issues which need urgent attention: a) should capital gains/losses be included in the calculation of output and b) should income received from own funds be included? The 1993 SNA recommends excluding both: in our judgement, this recommendation must be re-examined.

In the 1993 SNA, the valuation of government services, including defence is equated to their costs: intermediate consumption, compensation of employees and consumption of fixed capital. It is now argued convincingly that the full cost of capital services - consumption of fixed capital plus financial cost or interest cost of capital should be included in the valuation of government services, as is done in the business sector. The 1993 SNA limitation to include only the consumption of fixed capital needs to be re-examined as the inclusion of the full cost of capital services will add a very significant amount to the value of government services and total GDP.

In addition to the valuation of financial services and government and defence services, the 1993 SNA is deficient in its handling of head office activities, particularly when accounts are prepared by regions. In the 1993 SNA, the head office is not recognised as a separate establishment, it has no output or value added and its costs are distributed to the establishments it serves. This convention produces counter-intuitive results when the head office is in one region and the establishments it serves are in other regions

The main report has four sections and is limited to issues which primarily affect the production account, specifically the level of output, value added and GDP, both at the total economy level and by industry or sector, all at current prices. Section A deals with aspects of the 1993 SNA production boundary which have not yet been implemented in the two countries and the reasons thereof. Section B looks at the production accounts for institutional sectors and the reasons for their partial implementation. Section C examines the different practices for valuation and industry detail in the two countries. The last section critically examines the parts of the 1993 SNA which, in our judgement, are problematic and need to be changed. In all, 27 issues are critically examined. The formats have identical features: the issue is noted, the 1993 SNA guidelines are examined, the current practices by both countries are elaborated and, then, concluding remarks are made. This format was chosen so that any other country can easily replicate it and compare its own practices vis-à-vis the 1993 SNA and the USA or Canada.

This report was the result of cooperation between professionals of

the USA and Canada on harmonisation and improvement of our respective national accounts, and hopefully, in due course, international standards. For more information please contact karen.wilson@statcan.ca

Merchandise and Services Trade Statisticians Meet Together

By Andreas Lindner and Bill Cave, OECD

The Fourth OECD International Trade Statistics Experts Meeting and the OECD-EUROSTAT Meeting of Experts in Trade-In-Services Statistics took place in Paris from 7th to 10th April 2003 including, for the first time, a joint session on issues of common interest to the two groups. Attendance this year was the highest ever with 82 delegates from 35 Delegations representing OECD countries and International Organisations.

The joint session discussed ideas for a broader more analytically useful picture of trade developments and specific measurement issues that affected both groups. There were presentations on:

- i) indicators of economic globalization – conceptual and methodological principles, guidelines and data;
- ii) a taxonomy of statistical indicators for the analysis of international trade and production;
- iii) recommendations on measuring international trade in software, whether goods or services;
- iv) global imbalances in the reported exports and imports of maritime freight transport services;
- v) issues and plans for the revision of the Balance of Payments Manual.

At the Merchandise Trade Meeting delegates were pleased to hear that Internet demand for OECD statistics was highest for the annual commodity trade statistics database (ITCS), closely followed by National Accounts data. Delegates strongly supported the continuation of data sharing with the United Nations Statistics Division which should ultimately lead to one joint world trade database. Delegates also welcomed the integration of trade and balance of payments activity in the recent reorganisation of the Statistics Directorate.

The meeting requested further work on:

- linkages between trade and business registers, especially regarding small and medium-sized enterprises;
- asymmetry analysis;
- reconciliation of customs-based data with balance of payments data;
- quality and metadata management;
- trade and industry classification issues.

The Trade in Services Meeting discussed plans for the expansion of data collection on trade in services by partner country. The meeting supported in principle a proposed joint OECD-Eurostat methodological questionnaire on trade in services – subject to written comments on the substance and the process. The meeting also:

- encouraged OECD to continue to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services having regard to data quality
- supported further development work on measuring mode 4 trade in services

There was wide approval for the innovation of a joint session and it was agreed that this meeting format should be used again in 2004, when a session would be devoted to trade issues arising in the proposed revision of the Balance of Payments Manual.

For further information on these meetings, the agendas and papers can be found on the OECD website at <http://www.oecd.org/EN/newsevents/0,,EN-newsevents-422-15-no-no-no-422.00.html#event>

Improving Statistics on SMEs and Entrepreneurship

By Andreas Lindner, OECD

The first OECD Conference of Ministers responsible for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), jointly organised with the Italian Government, took place in Bologna in June 2000. It led to formulation of the “Bologna Charter on SME Policies”, which has been adopted by almost 50 OECD and non-OECD countries. This “Bologna Process” continues to represent a major horizontal project at the OECD, who is now organising the second Conference of Ministers responsible for SMEs on “Promoting Entrepreneurship and

Innovative SMEs in a Global Economy”. This conference, jointly organised with the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Trade, will be held in Istanbul on 3-5 June 2004.

The aim of the second conference is to further increase the understanding of issues and policies related to entrepreneurship and SMEs competitiveness in the global economy, with particular focus on the roles of innovation, financing, territorial/local clusters and partnerships, ICTs and electronic commerce for SMEs. These themes are also examined in the context of transition economies and developing countries, and a particular focus is put on promoting SMEs for development as the international agenda calls for a high priority to be given to development issues in the framework of monitoring globalisation. With a view to strengthening international dialogue and co-operation between OECD members and non-members in the design and implementation of policies for SMEs, 45 non-member countries/economies are now participating in the Bologna Process.

Because of its relevance across themes, “Statistics on SMEs” is one of the two cross-cutting themes of the “Bologna Process” (the other being “Evaluation”). The clarification and harmonisation of conceptual and measurement issues on SMEs have been clearly recognized as a prerequisite for accurate and comparable data at an international level. In response to this need, a “Workshop on Improving Statistics on SMEs and Entrepreneurship” will be held at the OECD from 17 to 19 September 2003.

This workshop, which is one of the preparatory meetings for the Istanbul SME Ministerial meeting in 2004, is jointly organised by the Statistics Directorate and the Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry. Its focus will be to better identify and evaluate the effectiveness of national practices and approaches in a comprehensive way and to address the key issues underlying a deficient and incomplete measurement of SME conditions. This comprehensive stocktaking is expected to permit the identification of possible ways towards a more solid quantitative basis for national SME strategies, both in OECD and non-OECD countries/economies. The elaboration of OECD proposals and recommendations for a better SME

measurement would be proposed for endorsement to Ministers at the Istanbul Conference next year in June.

The workshop will be organised as follows: the first day will be devoted to analysing the status of SME statistics in OECD countries. A comparative analysis of approaches adopted at national level to develop SME statistics will be presented which will try to identify good practices and innovative strategies. The discussion will be aimed at identifying clear recommendations to improve the quality of SME statistics.

The second day of the workshop will focus on the dynamics of firm growth and the factors that help explain the growth and survival of SMEs. It will cover four themes, namely: 1) enterprise demography (the entry, exit and survival of firms); 2) the role of gender in firm growth; 3) factors of success (the factors that help explain the success of certain firms); and 4) the role of data linking and longitudinal analysis in helping examine firm growth. The final session of the day will derive main conclusions for implementing feasible approaches to measure the above mentioned phenomena.

The third day will present experiences from a selected group of non-Members, in order to identify recommendations to help non-OECD economies to develop their statistics on SMEs. Finally, general conclusions from the workshop will be discussed and identified and will constitute the basis for the formulation of key recommendations to be proposed to Ministers for endorsement.

Further information on this workshop and/or SME statistics at OECD in general can be obtained directly from Andreas Lindner, OECD, using the generic email account STD.SMESTAT@oecd.org

ACCESS ON LINE DEVELOPMENTS

Davidson Data Center and Network for transition economies

By Zahn Bozanic, William Davidson Institute at University of Michigan

The Davidson Data Center and Network (DDCN) <http://www.wdi.bus.umich.edu/ddcn> is an integrated, fully searchable database on transition and emerging market economies. The goal of the project is to preserve and make widely available data from these economies as well as to facilitate the uncovering of existing data sets. The data accessible through DDCN covers both micro data and macro statistics.

SourceOECD

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For a free trial of this service, contact sourceoecd@oecd.org or go to www.SourceOECD.org

DDCN has three main components: a data locator, an archive and a clearinghouse. The data locator component enables students and researchers to discover and quickly assess basic information on data provided by other research institutes, multilateral organizations, individual faculty members or commercial vendors. In addition to supplying the direct link to the data, DDCN presents in a standardized format, information on the type of data access, fees charged by the data providers (if any), main variables in the dataset, geographic coverage, time period, links to related publications, etc.

The data archive component is integrated with the data locator and presented under the same user friendly

interface. Data that can be made public is downloadable from DDCN at no charge. Currently, the most popular data sets (based on number of downloads) include well documented enterprise surveys from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, China and Russia. Some of these surveys cover de novo, privatized and state owned enterprises. The time period covered varies from one study to the other. The primary sources for the data that DDCN acquires stores and directly disseminates are individual faculty members and researchers who study transition and emerging market economies and are willing to share their data for secondary analysis.

DDCN also facilitates data exchanges between researchers and between institutions. For data that cannot be made available in the public domain, DDCN assumes an active role in the brokering of access.

The Data Center was developed at the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan Business School and it is jointly funded by a National Science Foundation grant and the Davidson Institute. For more information, or to begin using the DDCN immediately, please visit: <http://www.wdi.bus.umich.edu/ddcn>. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, feel free to contact us at any time at: DDCN@bus.umich.edu, phone +1.734.615.4566, fax +1.734.763.5850

□ Taxing Wages

Taxing Wages provides unique information on income tax and social security contributions levied from employees and their employers in OECD countries. In addition, this annual publication specifies family benefits paid as cash transfers. Amounts of taxes and benefits are detailed programme by programme, for eight household types which differ by income level and household composition. Results reported include the marginal and effective tax burden for one- and two-earner families, and total labour costs of employers. These data on tax burdens and cash benefits are widely used in academic research and the preparation and evaluation of social and economic policies.

This year's issue includes a Special feature on "Taxing families". An extended version of the database (1979-2002) is available on CD-ROM and on line at <http://www.SourceOECD.org>

PRESS RELEASES

OECD Standardised Unemployment Rate rises to 7.2% in April 2003

The standardised unemployment rate for the OECD area rose to 7.2% in April 2003, 0.1 percentage point higher than the previous month and 0.3 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

In the Euro area, the standardised unemployment rate remained at 8.8% in April 2003, 0.5 percentage point higher than a year earlier. For the United States, the standardised unemployment rate was 6.0% in April 2003, 0.2 percentage point higher than the previous month and 0.1 percentage point higher than a year earlier. For Japan, the standardised unemployment rate remained at 5.4% in April 2003, 0.1 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

Over the twelve months to April 2003, the standardised unemployment rate rose in France from 8.7% to 9.1%, in Germany from 8.4% to 9.4% and fell in Canada from 7.6% to 7.5%. In February 2003, the standardised unemployment rate in the United Kingdom was 5.1%, the same rate as a year earlier. In January 2003, the standardised unemployment rate in Italy was 9.0%, the same rate as a year earlier.

The standardised unemployment rates for the other OECD countries are available at www.oecd.org/statistics/data (Frequently Asked Statistical Tables).

OECD Standardised Unemployment Rates - percentage of civilian labour force

	2002												2003			
	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec	jan	feb	mar	apr			
OECD-Total	6.9	6.9	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.1	7.0	7.0	7.1	7.2			
EU15	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.1			
Euro area	8.3	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.8			
Major seven	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.6	6.7			
Canada	7.6	7.7	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.5			
Germany	8.4	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.9	9.0	9.2	9.3	9.4			
France	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.9	8.9	9.0	9.0	9.1	9.1			
Italy	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	9.0						
Japan	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.5	5.3	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.4	5.4			
United Kingdom	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	4.9	5.0	5.1					
United States	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.0	5.7	5.8	5.8	6.0			

The OECD Composite Leading Indicator rises in April 2003

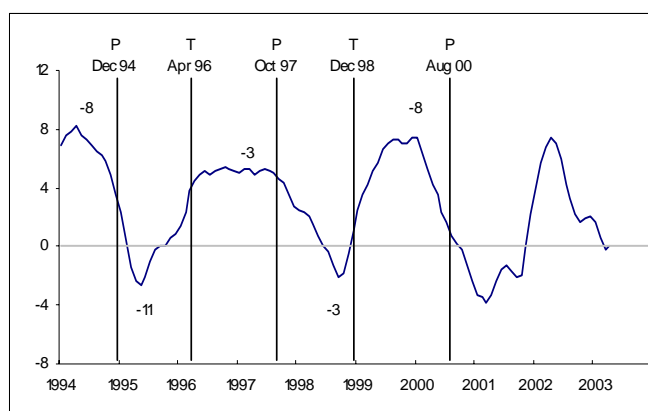
The Composite Leading Indicator (CLI) for the OECD area rose by 0.2 point in April 2003 to 120.2 from a revised 120.0 in March. Its six-month rate of change also rose after showing a downward trend since May 2002.

The CLI for the United States increased by 0.7 point in April following two months of decreases. Its six-month rate of change was also up after three months of decreases. The Euro area's CLI rose by 0.1 point in April but its six-month rate of change has fallen for 11 consecutive months. In April, the CLI for Japan was down by 0.5 point and its six-month rate of change has shown a downward trend from December 2002.

The CLI for the United Kingdom rose in April and its six-month rate of change increased for the second consecutive month after showing a strong downward trend since June 2002. The CLI for Canada was unchanged in April. Its six-month rate of change was also unchanged following a downward trend registered since May 2002. The CLI for France decreased in April and its six-month rate of change has fallen for five consecutive months. The CLI for Germany rose by 0.1 point in April, but its six-month rate of change has fallen for 11 consecutive months. Finally, the CLI for Italy fell in April, as did its six-month rate of change.

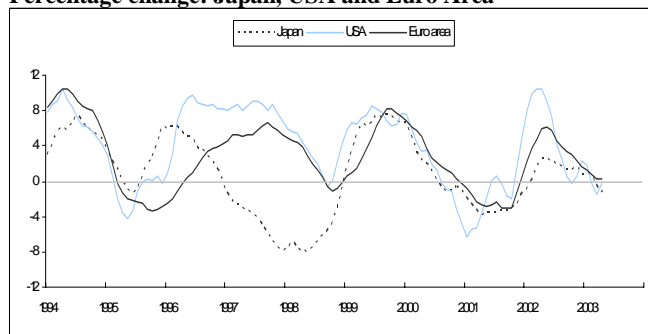
CLI data for all the countries and detailed information on the OECD methodology for CLIs can be found on the OECD website at <http://www.oecd.org/std/cli>

Trend restored CLI (annualized 6-month rate of change). Percentage change: total OECD



Early signals of the CLI for turning points (P: peak, T: trough) in the reference series, e.g. a peak for December 1994 was predicted by the CLI, 8 months in advance (i.e. -8).

Percentage change: Japan, USA and Euro Area



DRAFT COMPILATION GUIDE ON FINANCIAL SOUNDNESS INDICATORS

Available for comments on IMF website
www.imf.org/external/nps/sta/fsi/eng/fsi.htm

- Provides guidance on the concepts and definitions, data sources, and techniques, for compiling and disseminating a list of core and encouraged Financial Soundness Indicators
- Defines the types of financial institutions; sets out detailed accounting rules, including valuation of instruments, and provides conceptual advice on individual line items in the income and expense and balance sheet accounts, from which to calculate many FSIs
- Explains approaches to aggregation and consolidation of data
- Provides guidance on measuring real estate prices and certain financial market information
- Gives practical advice on compiling and analyzing peer group data
- Contains appendices on numerical examples and summaries for each FSI

Comments invited through *June 20, 2003*, may be sent by email (staf2fsi@imf.org) by fax (+1 202 623 5411) or addressed to:

Director
Statistics Department
IMF
700, 19th street NW
Washington DC 20431
USA

The IMF Executive Board endorses the preparation of the Compilation Guide to encourage countries to develop stronger and more effective financial sectors. The work on FSIs complements other initiatives to strengthen financial systems, including the joint IMF-World Bank Financial Sector Assessment Program launched in 1999.

Forthcoming OECD Statistics Meetings

N.B. Unless otherwise indicated attendance at OECD meetings and Working Parties is by invitation only

2003

2-5 June Meeting of the Working Party on National Experts on Science and Technology Indicators – NESTI, Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry (STI), OECD Paris

3 June Steering Group on Revenue Statistics, Directorate for Financial, Fiscal, And Enterprise Affairs (DAFFE), OECD Paris

13 June High Level Group Meeting of Statisticians, Statistics Directorate (STD), Geneva

24 June Working Group on Environmental Information and Outlooks, Environment Directorate (ENV), OECD Paris

26-27 June Short-term Economic Statistics Expert Group (STESEG), Statistics Directorate (STD), OECD Paris

June OECD Working Party on Territorial Indicators (TDS)

2-4 July ECE-Eurostat FAO/OECD Meeting on Food and Agriculture Statistics, Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (AGR), OECD Paris

4 September Meeting between Statistics Directorate and Permanent Delegations Statistics Directorate (STD), OECD Paris

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If you have a Windows PC and can access the Internet from your desktop PC, access to OLISnet will be simple and easy, as shown by the increasing number of officials who connect directly from their Ministry network - more information on this fast and cost effective way of connecting to OLISnet can be obtained by contacting:

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