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*Four Challenges for International Statisticians**

By Donald Johnston, OECD Secretary General

Today, everybody agrees that good knowledge of the reality of markets, of economic and social developments, etc. is an absolutely critical element for the success of any government policy, of an enterprise, or even of a career. On the other hand, because an enormous quantity of information is available, the problem is not really to know: it is what to know and how to distinguish between good and bad information. This maxim is of course, relevant for citizens. It is vital when we are speaking about policy-makers. And indeed they use a lot of information, including in statistics, which are a part of the foundation for what we now commonly call knowledge-based decision-making. The "knowledge-based" economy, society, or decision-making has become a common slogan. But I don't think we will find anyone in the increasingly knowledge-based economies today, who would contradict that.

The question is how to transform this slogan into really concrete and regular practice. How to ensure that policy needs are taken into account when new statistics are developed and how to ensure that necessary resources are invested to produce good statistics over time. For example, at the OECD we do a great deal of benchmarking. This produces a statistical photo at one point in time in order to be able to indicate progress at another period of time where there will be another statistical photograph. This allows measurement of advancements that are consistent and long term. Benchmarking is being practised in a number of areas, for example, for sustainable development. Assuming we can establish the right statistical indexes, indicators for sustainable development will only be relevant if we can see over a long period of time whether we are moving in the right direction. That's a long-term investment.

In particular, for an organisation like the OECD, which does not have any legislative power, the strength of our proposals and the success of our initiatives can only come from the quality and credibility of our work, and this is normally based on the reliability of statistics used to derive policy prescriptions. Clearly the progress towards the knowledge of our society is a never-ending story because knowledge changes continuously and new challenges emerge almost every day. I don't want to make a list of priorities for our future statistical work, but let me stress a couple of areas where, from my personal perspective, I see a need for improvement. First, the comparability and reliability of statistics for what we call "global players". Second, the accuracy in measuring productivity and economic growth today. Third, a better knowledge of social phenomena. Fourth, the measurement of sustainable development.

We all talk about the term globalisation, but it's a fact and it is changing the way in which everyone -- policy makers, entrepreneurs, citizens – makes decisions. For example, during the recent May 2002 OECD Forum a session was dedicated to a discussion on whether statisticians are measuring globalisation correctly. I don't want to enter into that debate today (it is perhaps something that you will be discussing here), but I would like to stress that for global players – that is the main countries, the main economic areas, G7 countries, the EU area, Russia, China -- and their policymakers the issue of the comparability and reliability of statistics is essential.

Another issue is the increasing difficulty over the past decade of measuring economic growth. There are several reasons why. Development of services, the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), the continuous creation of new products, the globalisation of production processes and the increasing role of financial

*This article is a summary of OECD Secretary General speech at the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2002, the full speech can be found at www.oecd.org/speeches.

In this Issue

services are only a few examples of very good reasons why statisticians find it more difficult to measure GDP growth now than in the past. Nevertheless, a special effort has to be made in this direction, at least to identify if differentials observed in the growth of main economies are real or are artificially created by the adoption of different statistical techniques. The OECD is deeply involved in this, but there is a need for a larger effort to be carried out in co-operation with National Statistical Offices and other international organisations.

A third point is that society is changing in various respects – including due to the introduction of new technologies and because of the economic and cultural integration stimulated by globalisation. Demographic changes are putting labour policies and social assistance under pressure in all of the OECD countries. Now policy makers need more statistical information on the internal dynamics of our societies in order to compare the cost efficiency of alternate policies in both the short and the long run. National institutional differences can make the development of comparable data very difficult. But this is an effort that has to be made because these policies will influence the well-being of future generations.

Last, the concept of sustainable development raises important challenges, including for statisticians. The OECD has undertaken some remarkable analysis of this topic, looking at the different dimensions of sustainability from a policy point of view. We have prepared a report on this work for the Johannesburg Summit. The report includes a review carried out in co-operation with Statistics Norway of the statistical measures of sustainable development that are available at national and international levels. The list of initiatives and good practices that one finds in that work is truly quite remarkable, but now it seems necessary to progress faster by integrating measures of different dimensions of sustainability. The OECD has analysed three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, social and environmental. Integration is absolutely necessary in order to evaluate the trade-offs in different policy choices. I understand here that there is the possibility of using what is called an integrated accounting framework to this end. In any event, I leave that with the experts to discuss.

But let me conclude these remarks by expressing once more my sincere thanks to statisticians who spend their professional lives endeavouring to offer policy-makers and all citizens the fundamental foundation upon which decision making must be made. I want to express my special thanks to all the people, many of whom are not here, who over the last 50 years have participated in the development of international co-operation in statistics through the Conference of European Statisticians. I am delighted to be able to welcome the Conference to the OECD today. The OECD is committed to developing the largest possible co-operation with other international organisations, including in the field of statistics. The fruitful experience during these 50 years, I think has been very important for all our societies, and I am sure that this Conference will continue to help us know ourselves even better during the next 50 years, although unfortunately, statistically I have to admit that I am unlikely to be here for that particular celebration.

I thank you all for joining us.

Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX): Moving Forward

The Heads of statistics of the six organizations that sponsor the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative met on June 14, 2002 to agree on concrete projects that will advance their joint initiative.[1] The institutions and their respective constituencies favour open and effective international cooperation in maintaining and if necessary developing new e-standards for their data exchanges. New standards should take advantage of the new web-based technologies and the expertise of those working on the business requirements and IT support for the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistical information.

Four projects, three of which bring "under the SDMX umbrella" work that is already ongoing in several institutions, have been proposed and agreed in outline, and work on them is planned to move forward immediately.

- A practical case study on emerging e-standards for data exchange
- Maintaining and advancing existing standards for time series data exchange
- Creation of a common vocabulary for statistical metadata
- Development of a framework for metadata repositories

Further information on the projects is given below. Participation in them is open to all interested parties. To learn more about them or about SDMX in general, please visit the SDMX web site at www.SDMX.org.

1) A PRACTICAL CASE STUDY ON EMERGING E-STANDARDS

The objective of this project is to investigate the practical ways in which emerging web technologies can be used to standardize and simplify the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistical information and to identify the core set of e-standards that are required to achieve the full potential of the emerging web technologies (e.g., XML and web services).

The project will serve as a reality check on possible opportunities by demonstrating just where these new techniques may offer improvements and advances over current ways of doing business, now and in the medium-term.

The project will use the Joint BIS-IMF-OECD-World Bank External Debt Statistics as a practical case study. These data are currently collected from creditor sources through different international statistical reporting systems and are already made available to a global user community over the Internet. They are expected to be complemented in the second half of 2003 by national statistics based on debtor sources.

The case study will be closely coordinated with developments in other SDMX projects and the knowledge gained over the course of the project will be used to formulate proposals for future SDMX work.

The project will be divided into three tracks: identification of key data-exchange models and scoping of

[1] The sponsors are the BIS, ECB, EUROSTAT, IMF, OECD, and UNSD. See www.SDMX.org for the common statement by these organizations.

demonstrations, experimental standards-setting, and practical demonstrations. Work on all tracks will occur in parallel.

Project deliverables (timeframes)

- Detailed project plan (August 2002)
- Identification of key models and scope of demonstrations (December 2002)
- Experimental standards for exchange and sharing of statistical information (1Q 2003)
- Demonstration of case study examples (2Q 2003)
- Proposals for next steps (3Q 2003)

2) MAINTAINING AND ADVANCING STANDARDS FOR TIME SERIES DATA EXCHANGE

All SDMX sponsoring institutions have agreed to support and use the GESMES/CB profile of the UN/CEFACT Generic Statistical Message (GESMES) as their *de facto* standard for batch time series data exchange.

The aim of the project is to maintain GESMES/CB for existing users and to promote GESMES/CB among potential users, particularly where this is to the benefit of SDMX organizations. The project will build on the cooperation that has taken place so far among the SDMX organizations and representatives of users' institutions in the GESMES/CB Maintenance Working Group. The project will develop more formal open structures and procedures for the maintenance and development of the GESMES/CB standard, based on best practices for standard-setting at the international level. The approach developed will serve as a model for the maintenance of other potential e-standards that may be developed under the SDMX umbrella.

The project will promote GESMES/CB through increased publicity and support (e.g., documentation, training, and the sharing of expertise).

Finally, the project will take on board the issue of an XML syntax for GESMES/CB.

Project deliverables (timeframes)

- Detailed project plan (August 2002)
- Develop business case and cost/benefit analysis for implementation of GESMES/CB in XML (October 2002)
- Draft standards-setting process for GESMES/CB (December 2002)
- Draft Quick Start Guide to GESMES/CB, to serve as an introduction to GESMES/CB for first time users (December 2002)
- List of institutions and organizations that are (or are interested in) using GESMES/CB (December 2002)
- Proposal concerning the use of XML syntax for GESMES/CB (December 2002)
- Revised draft of the GESMES/CB implementation guide (October 2002)
- Promotion program, including a strategy for training, to foster adoption of GESMES/CB on a world wide basis (March 2003)

3) A METADATA COMMON VOCABULARY (MCV)

The objective of this project is to develop a common vocabulary of key metadata items that describe statistical concepts and methodologies used by statisticians in the collection, processing and dissemination of statistical data. Such a common vocabulary (MCV) should be consistent with existing international statistical guidelines and recommendations, and with the terminology being used within SDMX organizations and national statistical agencies.

The envisaged product will take the form of a draft vocabulary of key metadata items, related standard definitions, and context explanations. The vocabulary will be used in existing dissemination frameworks, such as the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard and other frameworks used by national statistical agencies. The product would reside in an electronic glossary on the Internet linked to the SDMX web site.

Project deliverables (timeframes)

- Detailed project plan (July 2002)
- Identification of standard metadata items that need to be defined, including those required by other SDMX projects, and the collection of appropriate definitions from existing sources for each of those items (September 2002)
- Review of draft vocabulary by members of the SDMX project, and identification of possible sources of definitions to fill in gaps where definitions derived from international standards are not available (September 2002)
- Public consultation with other organizations and interested parties (December 2002)
- Incorporation of feedback into first production version of MCV. The set of definitions will be available in a glossary, accessible through the SDMX web facilities (Q1 2003)

4) METADATA REPOSITORIES

The objective of the project is to facilitate and broaden the exchange of metadata among international agencies and across countries through standardization of the organization of repositories (or collections) of metadata.

Floods Ruin Czech Statistics

The 14 August 2002 saw the worst case of floods in the history of the Czech Republic for over 500 years. The impact and aftermath has been devastating. On 5 and 6 September 2002, Ms Marie Bohata, President of the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) went to Eurostat to report on the situation of the office after the floods.

The CZSO was one of the few central public administration institutions in Prague to suffer exceptionally severe damages. The three-storey building of the CZSO was completely flooded. The consequences have been horrendous as the flood waters have completely destroyed the computing centre, fallen ceilings, desks covered in mud and debris and devastated what was the statistical library.

The cost of this devastation is huge. The rough estimates of damages to technology are around 400 million CZK and to the building alone around 170 million CZK. Although the Government supports the statistical services with some financial assistance, this may however not be sufficient as the extent of the devastation across the country exceeds budgetary reserves.

The OECD offers its sympathies and support by trying to provide CZSO with the OECD publications for the last few years to restore their statistical library.

The immediate objective is twofold: identify the commonalities in the metadata structures of macroeconomic datasets that are collected and stored in repositories; and use these commonalities to develop standardization. Work will take into account the experience with the development and maintenance of metadata repositories by the IMF (e.g., Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board) and EUROSTAT (e.g., Euro Indicators).

The long-term objective is to have searchable web sites of national and international authorities and private sector organizations using the same search vocabulary. A single inquiry could then be sent to multiple sites that would allow compilation of aggregate results. Here too there will be synergies with the case study as well as with the other projects focused on data and metadata models and vocabularies.

Project deliverables (timeframes)

- Detailed project plan (August 2002)
- Business model for macroeconomic metadata repositories accessible through the Internet that enables access to such information (December 31, 2002)
- XML structure for the rendering of the macroeconomic metadata resident in these repositories that will employ the Metadata Common Vocabulary defined by the MCV project. (December 2002)
- Business model of the acquisition/dissemination of the information within these repositories (June 2003)
- Protocol for the acquisition/dissemination of the information in these repositories implemented in XML (June 2003)

PARTICIPATION IN SDMX PROJECTS

SDMX intends to foster broad participation on a world-wide basis for the projects it is sponsoring. To accomplish this, SDMX will develop working procedures, such as the following, that allow voluntary participation by all interested parties in the public and private sector.

- Build on the work of experts involved in emerging e-standards, including international standards organizations and consortia
- Post draft deliverables and progress reports on the SDMX web site and soliciting public comment
- Directly alert institutions, organizations and experts likely to be interested in the work of the SDMX projects and any other SDMX initiatives in order to foster their involvement
- Invite global participation wherever possible
- Make use of tele- and video-conferencing when appropriate

Statistics Netherlands' Approach to Social Statistics: The Social Statistical Dataset

By Bart F.M. Bakker, Statistics Netherlands

A number of recent developments have triggered radical changes in the design and organisation of the statistical process at Statistics Netherlands: a growing demand for coherent and timely statistical information, new developments in ICT, high non-response rates for household surveys, and political pressure to cut down on staff and to minimise the reporting burden.

Users' needs with regard to social statistics have changed rapidly in recent decades. In short, users today want relevant and authoritative statistical information, providing an insight into the complex relationships between different aspects of social and economic life. They want information with enough detail to indicate the situation of small groups in society and to estimate phenomena with a small incidence. And they want it every year so that they can monitor important developments.

In line with statistical tradition, one possibility to fulfil these new demands on statistical information is to develop increasingly comprehensive household surveys. Such surveys aim to cover as many variables as possible, so that all relevant relations can be analysed in a comprehensive data set. The sample size should also be large enough to allow description of relatively small subgroups and phenomena with a small incidence. However, there is a growing awareness of the limits to this approach. The response burden on the sampled households becomes too heavy if too many variables are covered in one single survey, and this poses a serious constraint on statistical agencies to meet user demands. Moreover, non-response is a serious problem in household surveys: survey estimates may be called into question because non-response causes a potential bias that is hard to measure.

Administrative registers constitute a new – and relatively cheap – source of statistical information. Large numbers of records can be obtained at one go: for example the population registration, social security and tax data. This is not only an efficient way for statistical offices to gather a lot of valuable information, it also lowers the response burden for enterprises, institutions and households substantially. To fulfil users' needs and make use of the potentials of administrative sources, Statistics Netherlands started to develop its *Social Statistical Dataset (SSD)*. The work on the SSD involves processes that differ substantially from traditional production methods.

The Social Statistical Dataset

Ultimately, the SSD will contain all the relevant information on persons, families, households, jobs, benefits and living quarters in the Netherlands, from which consistent statistical outcomes can be produced with more regional detail and with more information on small groups in society.

The SSD is primarily based on register information and data from business and household surveys which is not available in registers. The registers frequently contain complete information on all relevant units. In the Netherlands, this is certainly the case for demographic data, income tax data, labour market participation, dependence on social security benefits, participation in education and housing facilities. However, there are other domains where complete registers are available, but have not been used by Statistics Netherlands until now.

The files of the Population Register form the backbone of the database, as all the other files are linked to this register. Linking on a personal identification number has proven to be successful: approximately 99% of the records are linked. If such an

identification number is absent, the sources are linked on post code, house number, date of birth and sex. This results in approximately 95% of linked records. The linked files form the basis for the work process of the SSD.

To collect survey data as efficiently as possible, the combined register data are increasingly used as a sample frame for household surveys. The data are pre-stratified for this purpose. If, for example, information is needed on poverty, the sample frame is divided by income classes and low income households are over-represented in the sample. In order to improve the linking procedure, personal identification numbers have recently been included in the samples taken from the Population Register. The success of the linking procedure is then almost 100%.

In the future household surveys will in principle only be used to collect information not available in registers. One of the problems with administrative records is that Statistics Netherlands receives them with a delay of sometimes more than two years. Information that is available in registers but has a serious delay and needs to be published timely, is also collected in surveys.

The lack of consistency between the various sources prompted the idea of micro-integration. Linking records from different sources provides a check on the completeness of the registers and the occurrence of double records. If different sources contain information on the same variable, they can be checked on consistency and corrected if necessary. Such data editing leads to consistent statistical information for the variables that are processed and makes macro-integration at a later stage far easier as many inconsistencies have been removed. After linking, the statistical variables have to be derived from the characteristics recorded in the linked records. For missing data for smaller fractions of the total population, imputation can be used as a form of integration to arrive at completeness.

Non-response rates are particularly high in the Netherlands. Non-response renders survey estimates less accurate because it introduces a potential bias that is difficult to measure. The SSD can adjust more effectively for selective non-response: linking administrative registers with survey information makes it possible to search for the characteristics that correlate highly with the probability of response and with the target variables in the survey. Furthermore, it is possible to select those characteristics to weight the survey. It will be evident that the use of more register information to weight the data has serious advantages over traditional methods to reduce non-response bias. This method results in the starting weights for the method of consistent and repeated weighting.

After collecting, linking and editing the data, it is necessary to estimate the frequencies and cross-tabulations to be published. If an output database like Statistics Netherlands' StatLine is to function properly it is important to enter consistent results from different sources. The method of consistent and repeated weighting is used for this purpose, a new application of old weighting techniques. The cross-tabulations are estimated in such a way that they are consistent with the marginal values of earlier produced tables. Therefore, the starting weights from the non-response bias reduction method are calibrated.

One of the advantages of the SSD approach is that much of the integration process that had so far been done at a macro-level can be performed on a micro-level. However, macro-integration will still be necessary, for consistency with National Accounts or with the outcomes of business surveys; for example, total government expenditure on social benefits minus implementation costs must equal the total of benefits received by individual persons. In some cases the macro-totals can be used as a restriction in the production of the individual weights.

Because ultimately the SSD will comprise a very detailed picture of every inhabitant of the Netherlands, data security and confidentiality are important issues. At all costs, Statistics Netherlands must prevent individual data being disclosed as this would seriously damage the bureau's reputation. There are also legal conditions which forbid Statistics Netherlands to publish individual data. Therefore, a strict security regime has been established.
To facilitate the above-mentioned developments, data warehousing techniques are used: Statistics Netherlands stores data in databases, using dimensional data models instead of relational normalized data models. This means that data are stored in subject-oriented datamarts. The dimensions are the classifications and other attributes used to describe a particular event or observation. They are grouped together in separate relevant dimensions. The observations can then be formulated as different combinations of pointers to the various dimensions, possibly with a number of continuous variables.

Statistics Netherlands aims to create a structure using datamarts with as many shared dimensions as possible in order to achieve a high level of continuous micro-integration. Sharing dimensions constitutes nothing more than trying to use the same dimensions wherever possible in order to achieve as much statistical coordination as possible. In this way everyone will use the same classifications for age, nationality, gender, marital status etc. However, because the most important dimensions are person, location, business and time, sharing dimensions will also cause complete linking of all related statistical data.

Where is Statistics Netherlands today?

Statistics Netherlands established a prototype for the SSD in 1998. It proved successful and in the next four years we developed the methods on linking, editing and estimation furthermore. This development up to now showed satisfactory results. In the mean time, more and more information from combined registers is used to produce regular statistics. Approximately 30% of the work programme is carried out with the use of the above-mentioned methods, in particular in domains where the use of register information has been

customary for some time like demography, labour market, social security benefits and education. The combined use of register information and household surveys is not yet such a matter of routine. Statistics Netherlands plans to publish the first results at the end of 2002.

The above-mentioned developments in statistical work have been carried out without the use of data warehousing techniques. Alongside these developments, in 2000 a first prototype of a warehouse was developed for the yearly snapshot of population register data in order to decide on the viability of this type of solution. This prototype was a success and was subsequently put into practice. The following year, a start was made on putting the complete population register in an event-based data warehouse. This will enable longitudinal studies and will be a much better starting point for linking other input to this register because there will be no temporal difficulties. At the beginning of 2002 a start was made on outlining a general structure using data warehouse principles for the whole SSD system. This work is now well under way.

Although the SSD-based production process is very promising and pilot projects have shown that it is certainly feasible, the implementation of the new production process requires an enormous effort. Against the background of constant financial cutbacks, the implementation programme faces heavy competition from the need for maintaining regular output. Although our ambitions are still high, reality has forced us to be pragmatic and take one step at a time. Nevertheless, we expect to take steps forward in the next few years.

New Estimation of Provisional Quarterly GDP in Japan

By Takashi Omori, Cabinet Office, Japan

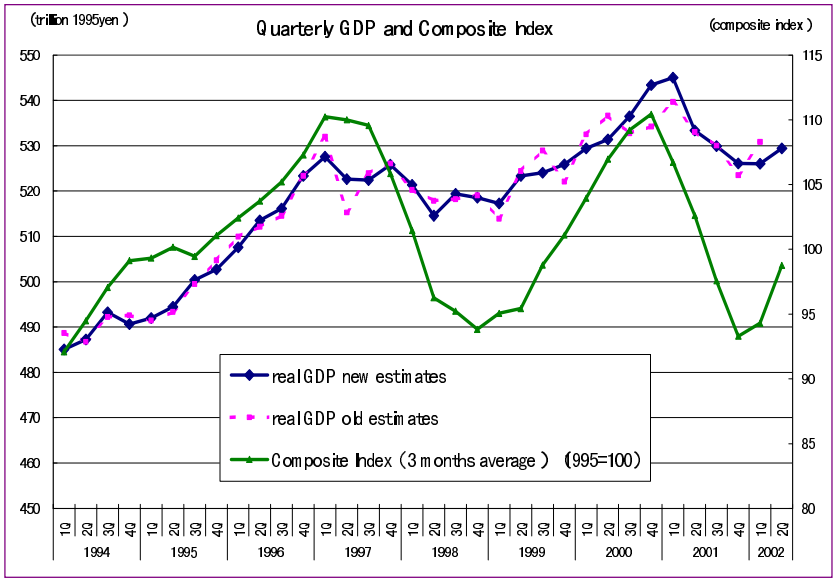
The Government of Japan introduced a major change in the estimation method for provisional quarterly GDP, with three broad aims:

- to improve the accuracy;
- to release GDP estimates earlier;
- to improve transparency.

The new method utilizes a wide range of supply-side source data. Under the new system, the first estimate is published by the middle of the second month after each quarter and the second estimate is published by the middle of the third month. This second estimate incorporates the results of the Financial Statements Statistics of Corporations by Industry as the source data for the demand-side estimate of private investment in plant and equipment and for some categories of inventory changes.

Private consumption and the second estimate of private investment in plant and equipment are obtained as a weighted average of the supply and demand-side estimates. The weights were determined using best linear unbiased estimation (BLUE), based on the sample-theoretic analyses of source statistics. In order to take full account of the latest information, estimates for the past are to be revised every time, reflecting revisions of the source data and as a result of concurrent application of seasonal adjustment.

According to the second estimates for April-June 2002, published on September 11, the real growth rate of that quarter was 0.6% (2.6% if annualized) with a larger contribution by net foreign demand than domestic demand. This was a slightly upward revision from the first estimate of 0.5%. The new method resulted in revisions of the past growth rates as follows: -0.0% for January-March 2002 (from 1.4% published in June under the old system): -1.9% for fiscal year 2001 (from -1.3%), -0.2% for calendar year 2001 (from -0.6%).



The main reasons for these revisions are:

A) The new method for inventory investment resulted in larger estimated inventory changes.

B) The use of a household survey on single people, of which the sample size is too small, was suspended.

C) The deflator for investment under the new system takes account of commodity composition of each period.

In the new series, most of the ups and downs that were difficult to interpret and often too large in the old series have disappeared. As a result, the new series have become much smoother and have higher correlation with other comprehensive business cycle indicators such as composite index.

The new estimates replaced the old ones from April-June 2001. However, for the time being, the Government retains the old estimates as official statistics for the previous periods up to then. This is because the new series are on the expenditure side only and not consistent with the existing tables on income, production etc., which would require a lot of resources to revise. See www.esri.cao.go.jp/en/sna/menu.html#93sna for the new estimates, and www.esri.cao.go.jp/en/sna/020612/point.html for further details on the new method.

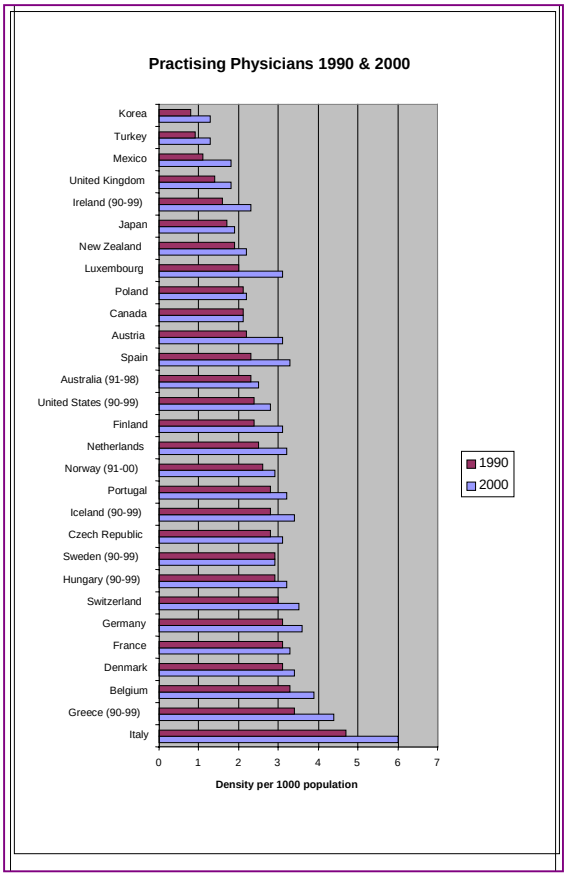
NEWS IN BRIEF

OECD Health Data 2002

The fourth and final Internet update for **OECD Health Data 2002** has been released on August 22, and includes more that 40,000 updated data items. The file can be downloaded for free under http://www.oecd.org/health/healthdata
(click on "OECD Health Data 2002 – Software updates – Fourth update just released (August 22nd)").
Just follow the procedure to automatically update your CD-ROM.
Contact point: sante.contact@oecd.org.

Statistics to note:
The number of practising physicians per thousand population increased across the OECD area between 1990 and 2000 see chart below.

Some caution should be exercised about comparisons between OECD countries due to differing definitions of "practising physicians". See Health Data Sources and Methods for detailed definitions.



Source: OECD Health Data 2002, 4th edition

UNHCR Asylum Trends

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees publishes a monthly news release on trends in asylum applications in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. These news releases can be found at http://www.unhcr.ch/statistics . The latest August edition reports a decline in applications in 2002.

During the first eight months of 2002, according to UNHCR, 23 industrialized countries reported received 276 thousand asylum-seekers, a decrease of 8 per cent compared to the first eight months of 2001, when 300 thousand applications were submitted.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

❒ Measuring the Non-Observed Economy: A Handbook

The aim of the *Handbook* is to identify and promote best practice for measurement of the non-observed economy that is consistent with international standards and, in particular, with the *1993 System of National Accounts*. In addition, the *Handbook* indicates how stand-alone estimates of the informal sector, of underground production, of household production for own final use, and of some illegal activities, may be obtained.

The *Handbook* is aimed at producers and users of macroeconomic statistics. The primary audience is the staff of statistical offices involved in the collection of macroeconomic statistics and preparation of the national accounts. In addition, the *Handbook* may prove useful to those who have reason to be concerned about overall levels of economic production and what may be missing. It may also benefit researchers and journalists who are confronted with a plethora of alternative measures of the underground, hidden, shadow economy, etc., and who would like to know why these measures are all different and which can be regarded as the most reliable.

❒ OECD Statistical Compendium, Volume 2002 – Issue 2 (soon to be available)

The OECD Statistical Compendium is a compilation containing a selection of the best-of-OECD statistics. These series cover the full scope of the OECD's areas of expertise: Agriculture and Food – Development and Aid – General Economic Problems – Economic Indicators – National Accounts - Employment – Energy – Financial and Fiscal Affairs – Industry, Science and Technology – Foreign Trade. It is an essential reference work for all those who need to have a macroeconomic overview of the OECD economies.

It includes more than 730 000 monthly, quarterly and annual time series which start from 1960 (where data are available). It is in MAXDATA software that allows direct access to individual databases or data series. It also includes a powerful full-text search function. The user can perform database search operations in some 730 000 record descriptions by specifying keywords. Results can be displayed in table, chart or graph form, and exported in various formats. This product is available in Windows (TM) or DOS versions.

❒ Research and Development Expenditure in Industry 1987-2000 – 2002 Edition

This annual publication reflects efforts made by the OECD to improve the quality and availability of industrial research and

development (R&D) expenditure data. The publication presents R&D expenditure data from the Analytical Business Enterprise Research and Development database (ANBERD) in ISIC Revision 3 for 19 OECD countries, as well as a zone total for the European Union. The coverage of ANBERD has been extended to 58 sectors, including wider coverage of the services, starting with the survey year 1987.

This publication facilitates international comparisons of the data, making it an invaluable tool for economic research and analysis.

The *Research and Development Expenditure in Industry* database is also available on CD-ROM and on line at ***www.SourceOECD.org.*** The electronic version includes data for 1973 to 1998 in ISIC Revision 2 and data for 1987 to 2000 in ISIC Revision 3. The data are presented in user-friendly software, Beyond 20/20™ for Windows™, that allows users to extract and export data, prepare customised graphs and tables, and perform their own analysis.

❒ Insurance Statistics Yearbook: 1993/2000 – 2002 Edition

The insurance industry is a key component of the economy by virtue of the amount of premiums it collects the scale of its investment and, more fundamentally, the essential social and economic role it plays in covering personal and business risks.

This annual publication presents the main official insurance statistics for all OECD countries and for Singapore, which has an observer status to the OECD Insurance Committee. The reader will find information on the diverse activities of this industry and on international insurance market trends. The data, which are standardised as far as possible, are broken down under numerous sub-headings, and a series of indicators makes the characteristics of the national markets more readily comprehensible.

This publication is an essential tool for civil servants, businessmen and academics working in the insurance field.

The database is available on CD-ROM and on line at www.SourceOECD.org. It is in user-friendly software, Beyond 20/20TM for WindowsTM, that allows users to extract and export data, prepare customised graphs and tables, and perform their own analysis.

❒ OECD Statistics on International Trade in Services, Partner Country Data and Summary Analysis, 1999-2000

This free electronic publication offers, for the first time from OECD, statistics on international trade in services broken down by partner country. Data are provided for 1999 and 2000. There is a summary analysis of trade patterns. You can download the publication in pdf http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00032000/M00032981.pdf or the tables in Excel http://www.oecd.org/xls/M00032000/M00032982.xls .

❒ Joint BIS-IMF-OECD-WB Statistics on External Debt

The 30 August 2002 update of debt statistics brings together unique data that are currently compiled and published separately by the contributing international agencies on components of countries' external debt and international reserve assets. Available at **www.oecd.org/dac/debt**

❒ Overview of Sustainable Development Indicators Used by National and International Agencies

This paper presents a general overview of recent work on sustainable development indicators in OECD countries. It provides an overview of on-going work for developing "agreed" indicators that measure progress across the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). The paper then takes a more specific look at the approaches to sustainable development indicators adopted by different countries and highlights the challenges of having one set of standard international indicators across the various countries.

This is an OECD Working Paper available on OLIS and on Internet at **http://www.oecd.org/statistics/working-papers**

❒ National Accounts for South Eastern Europe CCNM/STD (2002)2

The OECD organised a workshop on national accounts for non-Member economies in South Eastern Europe in December 2001. It was attended by participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

The workshop had two objectives. The first was to examine the reliability and availability of national accounts in these countries. The second was to encourage co-operation through the transfer of skills from those countries that already have substantial experience in compiling national accounts according to the international System of National Accounts to those that are only just starting.

This is an OECD/CCNM document available on OLIS in its original Format.

PRESS RELEASES

OECD Growth is 0.5% in Second Quarter of 2002

In the second quarter of 2002, GDP in the OECD area increased by 0.5% according to preliminary estimates.

Annual growth (the second quarter of 2002 compared with the second quarter of 2001) also increased to 1.4% from 0.7% in the first quarter of 2002.

Overall growth in the OECD area continued to rise (0.5%) in the second quarter of 2002 although more slowly than in the preceding quarter (0.7%). Annual growth was stronger (1.4%) than in the first quarter of 2002 (0.7%).

In the **United States**, GDP growth has slowed down to 0.3% in the second quarter of 2002 compared with the 1.2% rise of the preceding quarter. Annual growth rose markedly to 2.1% compared with the second quarter of 2001. **Japanese** GDP increased in the second quarter by 0.6% following the zero growth observed in the previous quarter but was still 0.7% lower than a year earlier. *

In **the Euro area**, growth was almost stable with 0.3% in the second quarter of 2002 after the 0.4% rise registered in the preceding quarter. Growth over the year reached 0.6%, from 0.3% in the first quarter of 2002.

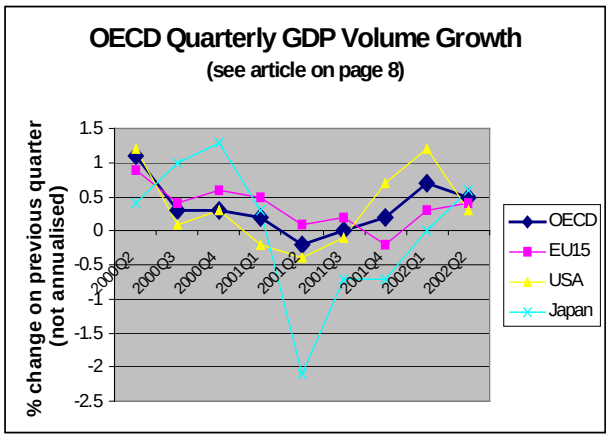
All the **G7 countries** showed positive growth in the second quarter of 2002 compared with the preceding quarter. They also registered an annual positive growth in the second quarter of 2002 when compared with the same quarter of the previous year except Japan which showed a negative annual growth rate (-0.7%). The highest annual growth rate is observed for Canada (3.2%) while the lowest annual rate is observed for Japan (-0.7%).

Country or area contributions to OECD area growth: between the second quarter of 2002 and the second quarter of 2001, the United States contributed 0.8 percentage points to the 1.4% OECD-wide growth, Japan contributed negatively (-0.1), the countries in the Euro area 0.2 and the other countries 0.5 percentage points.

* US and Japanese data have been significantly revised for preceding quarters since the last OECD release.

The full press release is available at

http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00034000/M00034195.pdf



OECD Composite Leading Indicator falls in July 2002

The Composite Leading Indicator (CLI) for the OECD area fell by 0.3 point in July 2002 to 116.1 from 116.4 in June. The six-month rate of change decreased for two consecutive months.

For the **United States**, the CLI fell by 0.7 point in July, following a rise in June. Its six-month rate of change also fell in July. The CLI for the **Euro area** fell by 0.5 point in July and its six-month rate of change decreased for two consecutive months. In July, the CLI for **Japan** rose by 0.7 point following a fall in June. Its six-month rate of change increased in July.

The CLI for the United Kingdom rose by 0.1 point in July, but its six-month rate of change fell for two consecutive months. The CLI for Canada was down by 0.3 point in July and its six-month rate of change fell for three consecutive months. The CLIs for France and Germany fell in June and July, as did their six-month rates of change. Finally, the CLI for Italy, as well as its six-month rate of change decreased for three consecutive months.

More on CLIs: http://www.oecd.org/std/cli

OECD Standardised Unemployment Rate rose to 7.0% in July 2002

The standardised unemployment rate for the OECD area was 7.0% in July 2002, 0.1 percentage point higher than in the previous month and 0.7 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

In the **Euro area**, the standardised unemployment rate remained at 8.3% in July 2002, 0.3 percentage point higher than a year earlier. For the **United States**, the standardised unemployment rate was 5.9% in July, the same rate as in the previous month, but 1.3 percentage points higher than a year earlier. The standardised unemployment rate for **Japan** was 5.4% in July, the same rate as in the previous month but 0.4 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

Over the twelve months to July 2002, the standardised unemployment rates rose in France from 8.5% to 8.9%, in Germany from 7.7% to 8.3% and in Canada from 7.1% to 7.6%. Over the twelve months to May 2002, the standardised unemployment rate in the United Kingdom rose from 5.0% to 5.1%. Over the twelve months to April 2002, the standardised unemployment rate in Italy fell from 9.5% to 9.0%.

The standardised unemployment rates for the other OECD countries are available at http://www.oecd.org/statistics.

Please send articles for the November issue of Statistics Newsletter to

STD.STATNEWS@oecd.org

***By* 30 October 2002**

Forthcoming OECD Statistics Meetings

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

2002

8-11 October
Meeting of OECD National Accounts Experts, Paris, *Statistics Directorate* (STD)
10-11 October Meeting of experts in National Health Accounts, Paris, *Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs* (DELSA)
17 October
Working Group on Environmental Information and Outlooks (WGEIO), Paris, *Environment Directorate*, (ENV)
17-18 October
OECD Paris 21 – Consortium Meeting and Steering Committee Meeting, Paris, *Development Co-operation Directorate* (DCD)
23-25 October
Pacific Group Meeting on the 2002 PPP Round, Mexico City, *Statistics Directorate* (STD)
11-15 November
Business Tendency Surveys and Leading Indicators (for ECLAC countries), Rio de Janeiro, *Statistics Directorate* (STD)
19 November
Steering Group on Revenue Statistics, Paris, *Directorate for Financial, Fiscal and Enterprise Affairs* (DAFFE)
20-22 November
8th IWG AGRI Seminar "Perspectives for Agriculture and Rural Indicators and Sustainability", Paris, Joint OECD-ECE-Eurostat-FAO, *Statistics Directorate* (STD)

Other International Statistical Meetings

16-19 October 26th CIRET Conference on Business Surveys Business Cycle Indicators and Consumer Surveys. Website: http://www.fep.up.pt/spe2002
14-15 November, CEIES 20th seminar "Labour Statistics – Towards Enlargement", Budapest, Hungary – see forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/dsis/ceies/library

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Deadline for articles for the next issue is ***30 October 2002***

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DATABASE OF THE MONTH

International Trade Statistics

Reliable, detailed and up-to-date trade statistics are vital for analyzing worldwide linkages of economies in an increasingly internationalized and global context. To provide both OECD Member countries and OECD analysts with a tool for economic research and analysis, OECD manages 3 trade databases. They are very different in purpose and nature. The first two concern merchandise trade while the third one concerns trade in services. This article will focus on the first two, that is trade in goods.

1. Detailed yearly commodity statistics, the ITCS (International Trade by Commodity Statistics) database

This is OECDs largest database. One of it specific features is that OECD staff have direct access to the entire database for analytical purposes and that a complete set of dissemination products for external users is available ranging from paper publications to CD-ROMs and Web-based access.

Variables included;

- Imports and exports
- Values (in US $) and quantities
- Reporter countries: all 30 OECD Member countries, plus some important Non-OECD countries
- Partner countries: 260 countries
- Classifications used: four product-based classifications (soon five) and tow activity-based classifications
  - SITC (Standard International Trade Classification): Revision 2 and Revision 3
  - HS (Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System): HS 88 and HS 96 (soon HS 02)
  - ISIC (International Standard Industrial Classification): Revision 2 and Revision 3.

HS is a more detailed classification than SITC. Since 1988, OECD receives data according to HS, which is then converted into SITC Rev. 3 and Rev. 2. From 1996, data may be also obtained according to HS96. HS02 will be implemented as of next year. It should be noted that while it is easily feasible to convert data from a recent revision to an older one, the conversion from SITC Rev. 2 to SITC Rev. 3 is quite delicate, if not impossible. Consequently, to obtain a consistent time series, one should carefully choose which revision to use. Before 1990, data are only available in SITC Rev. 2.

Both activity-based classifications (ISIC Rev. 2 and Rev. 3) are currently limited to internal use.

Dissemination

Coverage varies according to medium.

- The **paper version** of the database, shows import and export data broken down by commodity according to SITC Rev. 3, Sections and Divisions (1- or 2- digits), and is released annually in five volumes.

- The **electronic versions** (4 CD-ROMs or on-line), present data according to SITC Rev. 3, SITC Rev. 2 (2 CD-ROMs: current and historical data) and HS at the most detailed level of the classifications used. Data are provided from 1991 to 2001 (from 1996 for HS 96) for 260 partner countries.

- **Online availability:** A selection of trade data is made available through the Web. An increased availability is under consideration.

2. Up-to-date trade aggregates: the Monthly Statistics on International Trade (MSIT) Database

The Monthly Statistics of International Trade database provides detailed insight into the most recent trends in trading patterns of OECD countries. The database is updated on a permanent basis and a particular effort is being done to have the latest monthly data available.

Variables included:

- Imports an exports
- Values (in US $) and indices
- Reporter countries: all OECD Member countries
- Selected partner countries and groupings
- Indicators: aggregate trade (both unadjusted and seasonally adjusted), net trade and coverage ratios
- Volume and unit value indices
- Trade by SITC sections; and
- OECD Member countries trade by partner country.

Dissemination

- Monthly paper publication
- Monthly CD-ROM with all detail and data from 1960 onwards
- Selection available through the Web

3. Ensuring adequacy and relevance of OECDs trade data

A database would probably become less relevant over time without mechanisms in place to ensure a permanent exchange of views between producers and users and the opinions of peers. Since 1999, OECD holds yearly **International Trade Statistics meetings**, which bring together data providers from Member countries, data users, researchers and managers from other international agencies. So far, these meetings have proven invaluable for improving the timeliness, accuracy and methodological soundness of OECDs ITS database.
The **International Trade Task Force meetings**, convened yearly by the WTO, bring together international agencies involved in merchandise trade. OECD participates actively in these meetings and manages jointly with the WTO the Electronic Discussion Forum of this group.

4. Accessing the data

The data and methodological details are available on CD-ROM, paper and also via OECD's on-line service Source OECD. More details can be found at http://www.oecd.org/statistics/trade

5. Contacting us
We welcome any comments and requests you may have on the database. Please contact:
Email: std.tradestats@oecd.org

By regular mail: Trade, Industry, Agriculture and Services Section (TIAS), Statistics Directorate, OECD, 2, rue André-Pascal, F-75775 Paris Cedex 16.