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THE FUTURE DISSEMINATION OF OECD STATISTICS: A POLICY PROPOSAL

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In June 2005 the Committee on Statistics discussed challenges and future directions for OECD statistics. The final version of the strategy for 2007-08 was adopted in November 2005 and then presented at the Council in January 2006. The Council recognised the importance of developing a new dissemination policy for OECD statistics and welcomed the proposal to prepare a paper for joint consideration of the Committee for Public Affairs and Communication (CPAC) and the Committee on Statistics (CSTAT) and eventually to the Budget Committee, with a view of discussing the new proposal before the end of 2006.

This paper is a follow-up to a paper discussed by CPAC in April [C/INF(2006)4]. A number of sections from that paper are repeated in this paper for the benefit of CSTAT.

The Committees are invited to express their opinion on these proposals, namely:

- *The taxonomy of OECD statistical products and services;*
- *The access principles;*
- *The approaches to finance new infrastructures, products and services.*

This document is also available under the code C/INF(2006)9.

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THE FUTURE DISSEMINATION OF OECD STATISTICS: A POLICY PROPOSAL

Executive summary

- OECD's current dissemination system uses a mix of paid and freely available services. Overall dissemination is growing at more than 20% annually and a million items were downloaded in 2005.
- The majority of the €4.5 million earned from the paid services comes from SourceOECD, which uses a 'free-at-the-point-of-use' business model, whereby end-users have free access paid for by their library.
- Printed statistical publications are still in demand and will continue to be published as long as the demand remains.
- OECD has recently benchmarked its own dissemination policies and practices with other statistical providers. The conclusion is that users' expectations will be for more freely accessible services. Users are also expecting to see a wider array of supporting services in addition to the content and not to be locked into content 'silos'.
- Defining target audiences and understanding their needs is a vital part of a dissemination strategy. Based on an analysis of target audiences' needs and taking the environmental factors into account, this paper proposes the development of three main services:
 - OECD Statistics – a portal giving access to complete databases – (a mix of free and paid services)
 - OECD Core Data – up to 1,000 ready-made tables and metadata drawn from the databases – (freely available)
 - OECD Facts & Figures – a series of simple tables with commentary – (freely available) and an array of supporting services including search tools, linking tools, citation tools and alerting services.
- The dissemination of statistics is governed by the OECD's Publishing Policy and the OECD's Communication Strategy. The Publishing Policy, which sets the framework for the sales policy, is due for its regular two-yearly review, by CPAC, in September/October 2006. Without compromising the current policy, a set of Access Principles is proposed which, providing revenues remain at their current levels, could be adopted now.
- A key part of the proposed strategy is to actively push publishing metadata (which describes each statistical output) into non-OECD websites that are already heavily used by our target audiences and to enable outputs to be interwoven with analytical content.
- Innovative ways of presenting the data will be developed, aiming at diverse audiences with different needs
- The recent investments (largely funded by the Central Priority Fund - CPF) in the Statistical Information System (SIS) means that 80% of all OECD statistical data is now in the new data warehouse (OECD.Stat); virtually all data will be migrated into OECD.Stat by the end of 2006. The data warehouse is updated daily.
- OECD.Stat and SIS will be the main drivers and source of all future statistical products; direct access will be given to the warehouse from all distribution channels, and all other products will be built on this.
- However, there remain questions about how the needed infrastructure, new product development and service provisions will be financed.
- The paper describes the current financial arrangements for publishing and highlights the current lack of any investment fund to pay for the development of infrastructure, services and products. Therefore, the paper proposes that such a fund be created, financed by a proportion of sales revenues.

1. Introduction

1. In June 2005 the Committee on Statistics discussed challenges and future directions for OECD statistics. The final version of the strategy for 2007-08 was adopted in November 2005 and then presented at the Council in January 2006. The Council recognised the importance of developing a new publishing policy for OECD statistics and welcomed the proposal to prepare a paper for joint consideration of the Committee for Publishing and Communication (CPAC), the Committee on Statistics (CSTAT) and the Budget Committee, with a view of discussing the new proposal before the end of 2006.

2. This paper has been prepared by the Public Affairs and Communication (PAC) and the Statistics Directorate (STD), with input from the Service for Service for Information Technology and Network Services (ITN) and other directorates. It starts with a description of the current status of statistics dissemination and publishing policy. In the second section new opportunities for statistical dissemination coming from the creation of the Statistical Information System (SIS) are presented. In the third and fourth sections, environmental factors, driven largely by IT developments and statistics dissemination policies adopted by national and international organisations, which concern all information providers and publishers as they plan their future, are discussed. This leads to an analysis of the needs of different target audiences and a description of the sort of services that will satisfy them, together with a gap analysis showing which services OECD already provides and those it needs to develop. Finally, the paper will outline some of the organisational and financial challenges posed by the gap analysis, together with some conclusions and recommendations.

3. This paper does not propose any changes to the current Publishing Policy because the Policy itself is due for its regular two-yearly review by PAC Committee (CPAC) in September/October. However, the paper does propose a set of Access Principles that, without compromising the current policy, clarify how the three services proposed in this paper would be managed now, providing existing revenue streams are maintained. These Access Principles should meet Members' immediate concerns about how lay readers and those with limited financial resources in both member and non-member countries get access to OECD's statistical outputs.

2. The Current Situation

2.1 *The Dissemination of OECD Statistics: Key Facts*

4. OECD (excluding IEA) has approximately 160 statistical titles in one form or another. In terms of published format, OECD is currently using a wide variety: print, CD-ROMs & DVDs, online (HTML, PDF, Excel, csv, Beyond 20/20, web browser).

5. Since 1998 an expanding communications-oriented programme, drawn from the statistical databases, has evolved on the main website. The creation of a Statistics Portal in 2001 did much to pull together many disparate outputs into a single, organized, website. After the homepage, the Statistics portal is the most-visited page of the OECD website and delivered more than 680,000 downloads in 2005. Much of the OECD's key data is available, free-of-charge, via this portal: in fact, roughly 25% of OECD's statistical output is freely available on the OECD's website, including 38 complete databases. In March 2005, following the creation of the *OECD Factbook* and using the new SIS infrastructure, Country Statistical Profiles were created for each Member country. These have proved very popular, attracting an average 20,000 visitors monthly. At the end of 2005 half of the commercially available databases had basic datasets available for free, with the other half planned to join them by the end of 2006.

6. A special effort has been made to raise awareness of OECD statistics among journalists. A programme of statistical news releases has been created, supplying journalists with ready-made tables and charts that highlight key facts and figures, supported by commentary and explanations. The *OECD*

Factbook has also been a big success among journalists. A significant share of the requests received from journalists concern statistics.

7. In 2005 the first OECD Statistics Catalogue was published, for the first time providing a comprehensive overview of all statistical publications from the OECD and IEA. A key feature was the inclusion of an “Index of Statistical Variables”, in response to ongoing questions from users about where data can be found. This Index is now online via the main website.

8. Prior to 2001, OECD Publishing offered a range of printed statistical publications, diskettes and CD-ROMs for sale. However, overall, dissemination was on a downward curve because the print/CD strategy was no longer meeting the needs of users. In 2001, following an analysis of market needs, OECD launched SourceOECD, an e-library comprising all statistical and analytical e-books, e-periodicals and databases. A key feature was its ‘free-at-the-point-of-use’ business model. This gives users at subscribing institutions online access to all OECD publications and databases without any barriers or passwords – to all intents and purposes the service is freely accessible. Behind the scenes, their librarian pays a single, annual, subscription fee, regardless of the number of users or downloads. Since its launch in January 2001, SourceOECD’s features and a flexible pricing policy has resulted in 800 institutions choosing to subscribe. This means that all OECD e-books and databases are available, free-at-the-point-of-use, on the desktops of a potential audience of approximately 15 million researchers, students and other specialists.

9. A key feature of SourceOECD is the integration of the statistical databases together with the analytical publications – no other international organisation combines these two publication types in a single portal. This integrated offer was built in response to users’ needs and its success confirms the central importance of the statistical publications to the OECD’s publishing programme. The impact of this system can be clearly seen in the rapid growth in the number of publication downloads, especially for the online databases (see chart 1 and 2). Roughly one third of all downloads from SourceOECD are from the databases.

10. Even though dissemination of electronic versions via formal publishing channels has grown massively since 2001, demand for printed editions continues, albeit at lower levels than before. A typical statistical annual will sell at least 250 copies in print form, and *Main Economic Indicators* still has 1500 subscribers choosing to receive print. Overall, 25% of all dissemination is still in print form.

11. An additional dissemination route is via 21 licensed partners. Many corporate users are reached via the specialist services provided by Thomson Datastream, Bloomberg, and others. Universities in the UK and Germany are served by MIMAS and DSI respectively. It is difficult to obtain usage figures from our licensed partners, but what can be said is that free availability of data does not necessarily lead to high usage. For example, MIMAS provides a one-stop online portal combining statistical databases licensed from eight Intergovernmental Organisations. Access is provided, without charge, to the entire academic and tertiary student population in the UK, an estimated 1.5 million potential users. In the 12 months from March 2005 – February 2006, the total number of user sessions was 74,111, of which 9,705 (13%) were for OECD databases. A further 2,057 (3%) of the sessions were for IEA databases.

12. The launch of the *OECD Factbook* in 2005 opened up another new era. The service comprises a printed book, which sold just over 3,000 copies in its first year, and a matching online service, via SourceOECD, which is freely available to non-subscribers. In addition, each table was also released in Excel and made freely available to both print and online users via the StatLink system: this has proved immensely popular with around 75,000 files being downloaded. In the first month after the launch of the 2006 edition of the *Factbook*, some 35,000 visits were reported.

Chart 1 – Dissemination of databases, disks and CD-Roms – Years 1998-2005

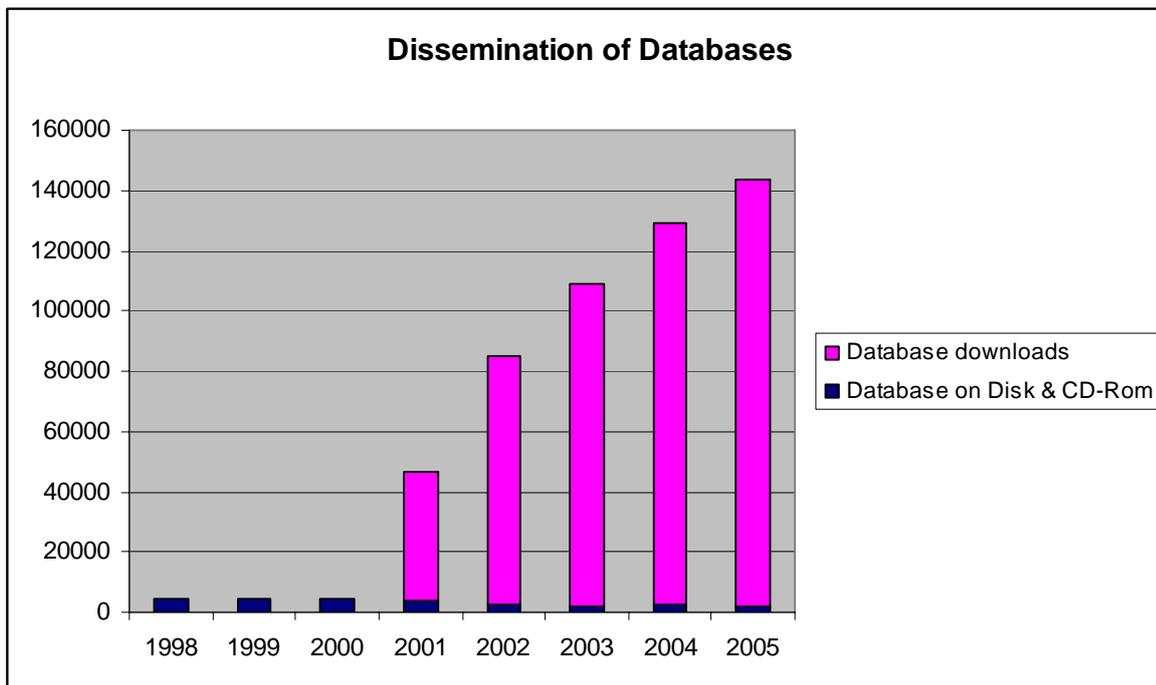
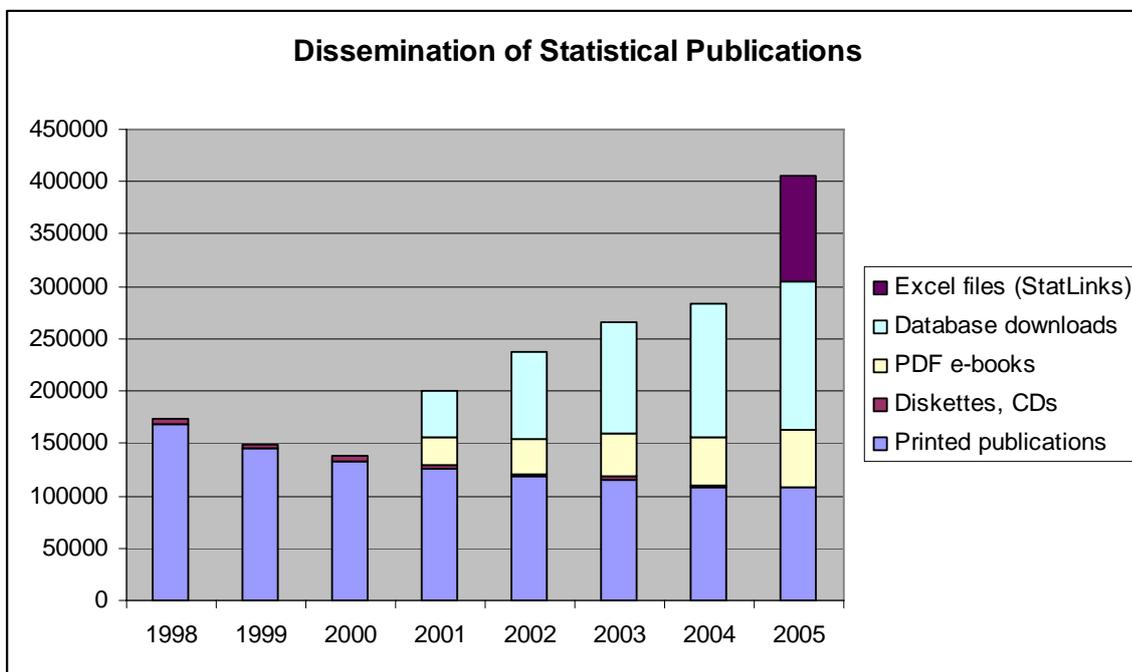


Chart 2- Dissemination of statistical publications – Years 1998-2005



13. A special effort has been done to improve the presentation of statistics to OLIS users (national governments, other public institutions, national statistical offices, etc.), who have free access to all databases and publications. Since 2002, the number of annual accesses increased from 1,000 to 11,600. In the first four months of 2006, a 45% increase on the same period of 2005 was registered.

14. In summary, since the launch of SourceOECD in 2001, a long-term decline in dissemination was arrested and started a period of strong growth averaging 20% a year. The launch of the StatLink service and *OECD Factbook* in 2005 accelerated growth to 45%. Overall, dissemination of statistical publications via OECD channels has grown nearly threefold since 2000. Annual revenues from statistical publications and services are approximately €4.5 million, of which 2.65 million come from SourceOECD, one million from printed publications, 0.34 million from CD/DVD, 0.5 million from re-sellers.

2.2 The Publishing Policy

15. The dissemination of OECD Statistics is governed by the OECD Publishing Policy [C(2004)126] and the OECD Communications Strategy [C(2004)74 and 198]. Briefly they can be summed up as follows:

- disseminate as widely as possible the statistics collected and elaborated autonomously by the Organisation, adopting high quality standards to facilitate their accessibility and interpretability;
- enhance the credibility of the OECD as a source of high quality statistics reflecting economic, environmental and social performance in member countries and in selected non-member countries;
- contribute to the development of a culture of “informed decision making” at national and international levels;
- where statistical outputs have a definable market, they should be offered for sale;
- pricing should be flexible;
- pricing levels should be high enough to generate sufficient revenues to cover publishing costs, while upstream costs are met from the Organisation’s regular budget.

16. Based on these principles, the current statistics dissemination policy (see table below) makes maximum use of online dissemination possibilities; ensures that the user community in general has free access to “basic” statistical information collected and/or originally produced by the Organisation; maximises co-operation with other national and international data providers. In particular, free access to all statistical products is given to all national governmental bodies, as well as, subject to reciprocal arrangements, to other international organisations.

Type of data	Updates	Channels	Pricing policy
Basic statistics	Concurrent	Statistics portal	Free
Other datasets and publications	Concurrent	SourceOECD	Priced
	Concurrent	OLIS (for OECD delegates and member country administrations)	Free
Methodological documents	Concurrent	Statistics portal	Free
		OLIS (for OECD delegates and member country administrations)	Free
		SourceOECD	Priced

2.3 Publishing: Financial Management

17. The financial management of publishing changed in 2005 with the creation of an Annex Budget (B75) into which all publishing expenses are put (management, editorial, marketing, pre-press, logistics, printing and online dissemination costs). Prior to this, publishing costs were integrated with the regular Part 1 budget. The Annex Budget lacks a budget line for making investments; in fact, there have been no capital investments in publishing in the past 10 years. All new product developments, including the development of online services, have been done within existing resources. Receipts from the sale of printed publications and online services are managed by BUD/FIN and are used to finance the Annex Budget. Each year a revenue target is set for Part 1 publications and, under existing arrangements, any surplus receipts would be returned to member countries.

3. Environmental Factors: What's Going on Out There?

18. It is well-known that the arrival of the Internet and other IT developments is stimulating a revolution in the way information is published and disseminated¹. This revolution is not just technical; it is also social in that it is changing the expectations and behaviours of any audience that has access to the Internet. In the context of this paper it is worth discussing three of the trends: open access, Web 2.0 and dissemination policies adopted by national statistical agencies and international organizations because any new dissemination policy should take them into account if it is to be successful.

3.1 Open Access

19. Before the arrival of the Internet, STM publications² (of which OECD's are part) and databases were almost exclusively read and consulted by specialist and student audiences of one type or another. These audiences were centred around institutions like universities, government ministries, multi-national companies, think-tanks, etc. Lay users, unless they were determined enough to visit a National (depository) Library, were effectively denied access because most booksellers would not stock STM publications. Booksellers did not stock STM publications, as demand from lay readers was so small that it would have been uneconomic to have done so.

20. Thanks to the Internet revolution and the efforts of specialist publishers to put their publications and datasets online, specialist and student audiences can now access the information they need faster, on a 24/7 basis and from wherever they have access to the Internet (even away from their place of work or study). There is some evidence that specialists and students are now using information from a wider variety of sources, but by-and-large they are still depending to a significant degree on the same 'core' titles they trusted and respected from the pre-Internet age. What has changed is the way they discover (search) and access this content. Specialist audiences have never had such easy access to so much information before – and this 'overload' has led to improved indexing and search tools, notably systems like Google Scholar, Thomson's Web of Science and Elsevier's Scopus. However, it is interesting to note that, as yet, no indexing tool has emerged that specifically helps users find statistical outputs.

21. However, frustrations over subscription models that simply replicated the offline business model for scientific journals led to the creation of a movement to put scientific papers and statistical datasets online

¹ For those who would like to read more there is an excellent Survey of New Media in The Economist of 22nd April 2006 and a book called 'The Access Principle: the case for open access to research and scholarship' by John Willinsky (MIT Press, 2006).

² STM, Scientific, Technical and Medical, a term widely used to describe all specialist publications, including those from the social sciences and humanities.

free-of-charge. This movement, now called the Open Access³ movement, has stimulated a wide-ranging (and sometimes heated and ‘evangelical’) debate about how research, that is often publicly-funded, should be published and if it should be freely available to anyone with an Internet connection. The arrival of open access, in combination with a plethora of other freely accessible online services, has changed expectations among users and other stakeholders. In practical terms, this opening of access has led to lay readers with Internet access being able to download some specialist literature and statistical data. But what are the consequences? One lesson, from the field of medical publishing, is that lay users need help to guide them to trusted and reputable sources and in understanding specialist content. This suggests that there are opportunities to provide adapted services for lay audiences. On the other hand, there remain substantial questions about how sustainable Open Access publishing will be from a financial standpoint.

3.2 *Web 2.0*

22. Wikis (web-sites that allow visitors to contribute their own content), of which Wikipedia is the best-known example, along with Blogs, Vlogs, Podcasts, social tagging and web syndication services all come under the umbrella term “Web 2.0”. Despite its look, “Web 2.0” does not describe a technical upgrade to the Web. In fact, Wikipedia struggles to define the term, saying that the meaning is still ‘in flux’. Whatever it means, Web 2.0 is probably the best all-encompassing term to describe some social and behavioural changes that are underway as e-media (Internet and other media like mobile phones) matures. The common feature of all these new tools is the ability of all users to share and self-publish in written, audio and visual forms. The audiences are incredibly small, usually fewer than 150. However, the number of Blogs (personal online journals) is estimated to be in the region of 25 million and a new one is launched every second.

23. Web 2.0 is being pioneered by those who are largely under 24 years of age – i.e. those who have grown up with the Internet. One-way ‘push’ publishing, as performed since the invention of the printing press and a majority of what online publishing is today, doesn’t allow room for readers to comment, improve upon, participate, discuss, create and debate. Tomorrow’s specialist audiences – the cores audiences for OECD’s statistical outputs - therefore may not be satisfied with a one-way service that simply gives access to datasets. It is worth reflecting that today’s 21-24 year olds are also today’s post-graduate student audience, known to be heavy users of OECD statistical data.

3.3 *Changes in Statistics Dissemination Policies*

24. Over the last few years several national statistical offices and some international organisations (Eurostat is the most relevant case) have changed their statistics dissemination policies. In January 2006 PAC commissioned Sabatier Consulting to undertake a review of statistical publishing policies and activities among Member Countries’ National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and among International Organisations (IGOs). The objective was to benchmark these against OECD’s practices (an overview of the results and the OECD’s own position is given in an appendix).

³ Open Access is a movement with many facets, so it is difficult to describe simply. However, there are some large groups getting involved, notably the Wellcome Foundation (UK) and the US National Institute of Health. The topic has been discussed by a UK Parliamentary Committee and caused the EU to publish a report on the economics of STM publishing.

Some Changes due to Internet

The arrival of the Internet has changed much. Despite the widespread assumption that the Internet would eliminate demand for printed publications, OECD's experience is that demand for printed publications remains strong, especially for the Factbook/At a Glance titles. Demand for CD-Roms, however, has fallen significantly and this format is unlikely to continue to be offered in the medium term.

The Internet is a young medium and it is still evolving; PAC has identified some emerging issues which need to be addressed:

Issue	Description
Information overload	The huge array of information sources on the web is causing users to be overwhelmed. The result will be an increase in demand for trusted sources of information and this factor, trust, will become more and more important in the coming years.
Discovery is difficult	Finding what is available is a challenge. Most users never look beyond the first page of any list of search results and information producers and vendors are becoming ever more skilled at optimizing their systems to ensure they appear there. This puts pressure on information producers to constantly fine-tune their websites to match search engine algorithms. Over time, we believe that users will become frustrated as they find too many unsatisfactory sites in the top-ranked search results, causing them to turn elsewhere for help. For those in large institutions, they are likely to rely, once again, on their librarians for guidance and training. Others will look to blogs, personal contacts, citations, media and advertising for help.
Multi-channel dissemination	Once users find an information portal they trust, they will tend to return there time-and-again. They will value portals which combine information from many providers rather than have to remember a variety of single-provider sites. Thus, building a dissemination strategy around www.oecd.org and www.sourceoecd.org will not be sufficient. To maximize discovery and dissemination, publication metadata that leads users to OECD statistical outputs will have to be loaded onto a wide variety of non-OECD websites (a prime example is the REPEC portal used by academic economists and high-level students studying economics).
New Audiences	The Internet potentially allows access to new audiences: a wider share of existing audiences already using OECD statistics; and to less-specialised, lay audiences, who do not currently use statistics. To achieve the latter OECD will have to choose which of the new audiences it wants to reach and adapt its services and channels accordingly.
Time	Users expect the Internet to deliver instantly, they are less prepared to spend time finding/extracting the information they need, especially if they are irregular users of statistics. This means OECD will have to spend more effort in making ready-made tables, with suitable commentaries, and not expect all users to have the time, skill, or inclination to build and extract tables from large databases

25. The main messages emerging from the benchmarking study are the following:

- OECD, in common with other IGOs, continues to see good demand for printed publications. NSOs in countries where broadband internet connections are well-established have reduced the number of printed publications on offer, relying instead on PDF e-books. On the other hand, OECD, in common with NSOs, is seeing demand for CD-Roms fall rapidly. IGOs serving developing countries report continuing need for CD-Roms;
- OECD, in common with NSOs and IGOs, has moved swiftly to disseminate statistical outputs online. The most common model, used by all organisations, is a mix of ‘ready-made’ tables (in either PDF, Excel® or HTML formats) and access to databases where users can build their own tables and extract data. Databases are offered in two forms: data sub-sets, where the organisation offers part of a database, or complete service, where all of the data is available;
- As far as other services (custom data extraction, advisory services and training) are concerned, OECD is unique in offering on-site training to its subscribing institutions, something for which there seems to be strong demand. Unlike all other statistical providers, OECD has an extensive network of licensed dissemination and visibility partners;
- Many organisations reported on the tension between the desire to provide more services for free and the need to generate revenues. All are responding by beefing up their free services and many are cutting costs by reducing the number of printed titles. However, most had little revenue to lose and were, in any case, largely covering publishing costs via central budgets. Of the organisations surveyed, only two (Statistics Canada and Statistics Finland) report revenues as large as those earned by the OECD – demonstrating that it is possible to offer a range of free services and earn revenues. In fact, most free services have restrictions: either limits on the amount of data that can be extracted or requiring personal registration before access is granted. OECD is the only organisation that has put all publishing costs into a separate, transparent, budget.

4. A taxonomy of users’ needs

4.1 *Who Are the Users?*

26. Any sustainable publishing system must have a clear definition of the target audiences and their needs. So who are the target audiences for OECD statistics? Currently they are used by policy makers, decision-makers, academics, students, consultants, educators, journalists, advocacy groups, government and inter-governmental agency officials, the legal community, and other statisticians. In addition, the data freely available on the OECD’s statistical portal is accessed by a diverse group often referred to as the ‘general public’, but which perhaps might be better described as the ‘informed, or lay, reader’. In thinking about these many groups of users, it is likely each has very different reasons for needing to use economic statistics and to have variable skills in being able to use them.

27. To simplify, one can categorise users into three types:

- **Consumers:** tend to use statistics for their own, personal needs, incorporating the information into their work or studies, re-using the statistics in their own outputs. Examples of consumers are: government ministries, other public institutions, educators, students, consultants, statistical authorities;
- **Cooks:** are avid users who produce significant outputs that do reach a wide audience, external to the cook’s own institution. Examples are: feature-writers, academics, etc.;

- **Commentators:** can be both consumers and cooks, except their outputs are short, usually transient, and likely to be in online form. Examples include journalists, bloggers and advocacy groups.

28. Quite apart from their reasons and needs, individual users also differ in two other significant respects: *skill level* in using statistics and knowledge of associated technical terminology, *time* available to find data, make extractions, to learn how to use them, to study and understand them. Tertiary students, for example, are likely to have ample time and quite well-developed skills, unlike undergraduate students, who will be significantly less-skilled and time-pressed. Educators are likely to be skilled, but have little time. Decision- and policy-makers are likely to have both time and skill deficiencies, but they can often rely on secretariats with resources and skills.

4.2 What Do Users Need?

29. There is no single answer for every user or need. Some may still want printed issues, or ready-made files that import easily to PowerPoint, others a sophisticated online service that allows them to build their own tables from the ‘raw’ data. The challenge is to stay in-step with user needs while remembering that each new route to access does not replace those that are tried, tested and still in demand. In a nutshell, three main kinds of products can be identified:

- **Complete databases:** available online, for skilled users who have the time to do extractions and fully exploit the data and associated metadata;
- **Ready-made tables:** available in print form and online, for semi-skilled users and those who trust the selection made by the data provider;
- **Ready-made tables with commentary:** available in print and online, for semi- and low-skilled users, interested in a “story” instead of in figures *per se*.

30. Statistical outputs are just one of many different content types. In the past, each content type (e.g. working paper, journal article, book, statistical publications, etc.) lived in its own print-based ‘silo’ and were found via specialist indexes and connected via the bibliographies and references found at the end of each document. Today, the web is breaking down these silos and tools (such as Google or other Internet services) are emerging to facilitate indexing, linking and citation management regardless of the nature of the original work. The immediate success of the OECD’s StatLink service, that allows users to jump from analytical outputs to the statistical data in Excel form, is further evidence that users don’t want to be kept in silos.

31. The prospect of making ‘horizontal’ data extractions across OECD’s ‘vertical’ databases (now possible thanks to the corporate data warehouse “OECD.Stat” and to its browser) is exciting many users. Being alerted to new updates and releases is now much easier and tools even exist to alert users if a data set they are working on has been updated. Users are growing to expect, therefore, that all content be surrounded by a set of support services including:

- **Search tools** allowing free text search, across the whole Internet or inside a specific sphere, the most important being Google;
- **Discovery tools and systems** (e.g. search tools and indexes): to help users find the data they need as quickly and efficiently as possible from wherever they start on the Internet. These tools and systems need to be compatible with mainstream search systems (like Google) and with library systems and specialist Abstracting & Indexing services;
- **Linking tools:** Tools to enable linking to/from data/analytical outputs. These tools must be compatible with the other publishers’ linking systems;
- **Citation tools:** to enable users to cite OECD statistical outputs accurately, must be compatible with systems like EndNotes and RefWorks;

- **Context & Comprehension:** Links to statistical metadata at the most detailed level possible;
- **Alerts:** to announce updates and to warn when previously downloaded Excel files become outdated;
- **Re-use:** export types that are compatible with users' systems e.g. PowerPoint.

Thinking about the younger generation, there is a need to facilitate comment, feedback and debate.

32. For all audiences, trust in the source is very important. This is especially relevant when thinking about new audiences and lay audiences. Sites that succeed in building a trusted reputation and have the resources needed to keep vandals at bay, are the sites that most people both visit and link to from their personal blogs, wikis and so on. The information on these sites will therefore generate the most impact in the long run.

33. As we reach ever-wider audiences, especially non-specialists, the number of questions and queries received by the OECD increases. These questions are often very detailed and can only be answered by the statisticians themselves, which diverts them from their core tasks. Replying to questions promptly and effectively is a vital part of the overall service OECD must offer if it is to be judged as a trusted and reliable source of statistical information – therefore, adequate resources must be made available in substantive directorates for customer service activities.

34. In conclusion, this analysis shows that today the issue is not simply to make data and metadata available on the web, but to be able to provide (directly or via specialized channels) a set of services that can make the user choose the OECD as trusted a primary source, not only for statistics, but also for analytical and policy-oriented products. Publishing without a 'silo' mentality will mean users will move from OECD's data outputs to analytical outputs and back again, seamlessly. OECD is almost unique in having the potential to interweave statistical and analytical content – in fact, new audiences, especially in non-member countries, can be found for analytical publications by drawing them first to the statistical outputs (and vice versa). Moreover, by enabling OECD outputs to be interwoven with other publishers' outputs will, in turn, draw in new users – creating a virtuous circle of increasing access and dissemination.

4.3 Can the Target Audiences Pay for Data and Associated Services?

35. End-users in our target audiences have two things in common: they have little or no purchasing power for information services; virtually all of them need access to OECD data in pursuit of their work or studies, and their workplace or university does have purchasing power for information services. This institutional purchasing power often resides in the institution's library. Clearly libraries have varying purchasing power and smaller institutions may not have a formal library, but the principle is established: building a commercial offer for libraries that gives end-users access 'free-at-the-point-of-use' is possible. This is proven by the success of SourceOECD since its launch in 2001: around 800 institutions have chosen to subscribe giving access to a potential audience of more than 15 million end users.

36. To cater for the varying levels of institutional purchasing power, pricing levels need to be flexible. Equally, special attention needs to be paid to institutions in developing countries where purchasing power can be both very small and erratic from year-to-year. OECD is gaining experience in adapting prices to suit each institution's purchasing power, works to build consortia of institutions to share a subscription, and works with programmes like Hinari (The Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative) in Africa. Discounts can be as much as 90% and in the case of four countries in Africa, each pays a token \$500 to give access to all not-for-profit institutions in their country.

37. The key lesson is that a sustainable business model must not be built on the assumption that end users will pay to access data, it can only be built on the fact that institutions are prepared to pay for quality information services on behalf of their user population. This begs the question: how do unaffiliated

individuals get access? The answer is to provide low-cost personal access to complete databases combined with free access to a core set of the most frequently requested ready-made tables.

5. New Opportunities Arising from Statistics Reform

38. Set against end user needs described above, the range of outputs and services currently offered by OECD is incomplete. This limitation derives from historical reasons, technical limitations and lack of investments. Notwithstanding efforts made over the last five years, and the successes achieved, there is a risk that, without a substantive acceleration in the development of new products and services, the OECD could lose its position in the international market of information. This would also put at risk the current level of revenues. Fortunately, the ‘upstream’ investments made in the way data and metadata is managed, since 2001, in the context of the Statistics Reform open opportunities for the creation of new products and services, provided ‘downstream’ investments are also made.

5.1 *The OECD Statistical Information System (SIS)*

39. OECD has an immense statistical information bank, virtually all of which is uniquely held by the Organisation. Provided they are properly organised and managed, the data can be combined and used over and over again, for innumerable outputs. Until now, this potential has been underutilised in spite of a well-developed dissemination system, because each database was developed and managed independently using a wide variety of sometimes incompatible technologies. To activate this potential, the Organisation has developed a single system, the OECD Statistical Information System (SIS), developed since 2001 in the context of the Statistics Reform. To date, 75% of all databases have been migrated from their legacy systems and the target is to migrate the remaining databases by the end of 2006.

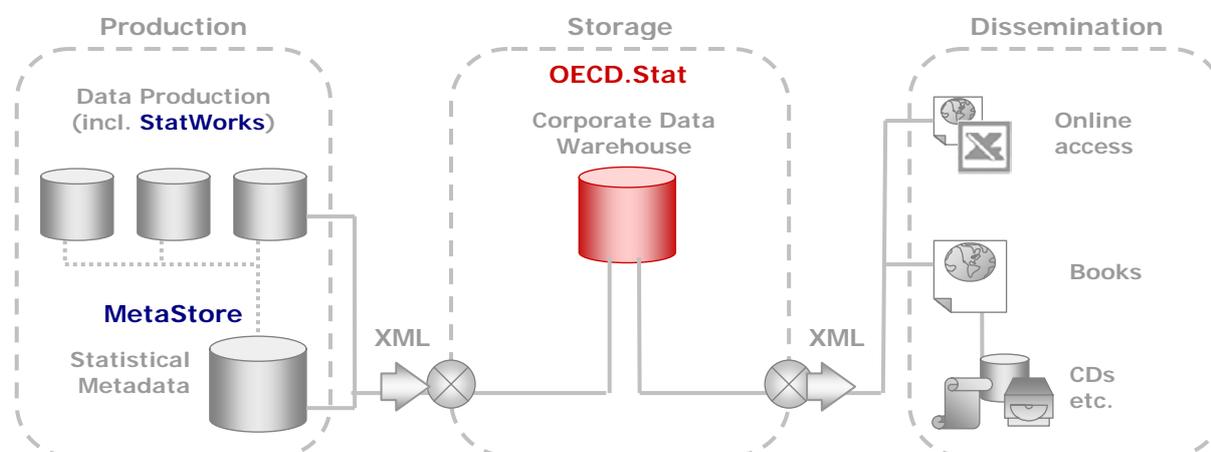
40. The concept of the Statistical Information System encompasses the whole production process from data collection to dissemination, including the management of statistical metadata (the explanatory text that accompanies the numbers). But the system is not just a technical solution. It also encompasses an ongoing, rigorous, quality assurance process to ensure that data and metadata are harmonized across themes and core reference data (such a GDP) is re-used across all themes.

41. The main idea is to move away from the “stove-pipe” production model where each product is produced in its own complete “production line” from start to end, independently from all others, towards a common environment where different types of statistics are produced, stored and disseminated using the same tools. **OECD.Stat** is the central warehouse where validated statistics and related metadata are stored; **StatWorks** provides a common hosting environment for production databases, which includes a toolkit for managing statistical data; **MetaStore** is the corporate metadata facility and provides a storage area for statistical metadata, an interface for managing production metadata, etc.

42. The data warehouse OECD.Stat contains the most up-to-date statistics possessed by the OECD because the databases are updated daily with all new data as they are verified. The data are held in a ‘raw’ form, combined with its metadata, and can be exported and displayed in a variety of ways. These exports can be to a web browser (to allow online access), to allow data exchange using international standards (e.g. SDMX⁴), to create Excel tables and spreadsheets, and to create XML files suitable for making printed publications and e-books. In addition, OECD.Stat can store “snapshots” of data, corresponding, for example, to the figures in a specific paper publication – these snapshots can, in turn, be output for viewing on the web or downloading in Excel format.

⁴ SDMX is a recently agreed international standard for the exchange of statistical data between International Organisations and National Statistical Offices.

Chart 3 - A schematic diagram showing the three main parts of the Statistical Information System, centred around the data warehouse OECD.Stat



43. In particular, the new browser for OECD.Stat, developed by ITN, offers a range of state-of-the-art features and functions to navigate, visualise and retrieve data and metadata. Data can be found using full text search, browsing by themes and by accessing stored queries. Metadata can be shown in an advanced manner, attached to the appropriate level of detail of the statistics. A new feature gives the possibility of accessing and combining several datasets in one query.

44. The benefits of SIS can be summed up as follows:

- *Quality*
 - Harmonisation of concepts across themes, thus opening the way for cross-cutting (horizontal) analysis and publications
 - Improved management and presentation of statistical metadata, now attached to data points rather than being in a separate document
 - Better coherence of data and metadata across datasets
 - Application of International Standards now possible across all databases (e.g. SDMX)
- *User friendliness*
 - OECD.Stat is a true one-stop database, with the potential to offer a single access method for all OECD statistics
 - Possibility to combine data across themes
 - Possibility to develop alternative outputs for different audiences
 - Easy access in very few clicks
 - Common look and feel of all databases
- *Internal Efficiency*
 - Common tools reduce the need for training on multiple systems and improves mobility of statisticians across OECD departments
 - OECD analysts need only learn how to use one system to access all databases
 - ITN need only maintain and support one system, not many

5.2 *New Opportunities for Dissemination*

45. The central message of the previous description is that OECD.Stat stores data and metadata in a flexible form that can output in a variety of ways, depending on the requirements of the service being offered. The export tools that make this possible can thus be developed only once and then be re-used time-and-again. This is a big improvement from the current situation which requires unique tools to be developed for each and every legacy system.

46. Because of the modular design of the whole information system, it is relatively easy to design alternative presentation forms that might be desirable for specific user segments or to view datasets that have very special characteristics. In fact, such an alternative browser and toolkit has already been constructed and is being used to give access to one very special dataset, the Benefits and Wages Model.

47. As mentioned, the SIS offers well-structured statistical metadata with links between different levels of attachment of the metadata. Duplication of metadata items between and inside datasets is drastically reduced. Free access on the Internet to such metadata can be given to users independently from the data. In addition to helping users better understand the statistics, this greatly enhances the visibility of the metadata and leads users to the data from leading search engines, such as Google. This has already been launched in 2006 for the database Main Economic Indicators⁵. More metadata will be put on the Internet in the coming months.

48. Until now, the full potential of the new data warehouse and of the new browser has not been explored for dissemination purposes because the system is still being developed and stress-tested. So far, full access has been given to all OECD officials and to government officials through OLISnet. Public access to a few databases (e.g. Education) is offered via the main website and the system is being used to deliver the popular Country Statistical Profiles, drawing statistics from the OECD Factbook. The OECD Reference Series can also be accessed publicly. Offline, nine printed publications have been created using the PubStat system which draws data from OECD.Stat.

6. A Taxonomy of OECD Statistical Products and Services

49. According to the taxonomy presented in section 4, three main types of products have to be made available to users: complete databases, ready-made tables and ready-made tables with commentary. On the other hand, search, discovery, linking, citation and alternative tools and services are necessary, as well as metadata. Where does the OECD stand in delivering these three outputs and various services? In a nutshell, the situation is the following:

Build-it yourself databases	Ready-made tables	Ready-made tables with commentary
Not fully satisfactory. Although most databases have been online since 2001 in SourceOECD, functionality is sometimes criticized and there is not yet any access to one cross-domain data warehouse. The development and the dissemination of OECD.Stat address these concerns.	Good. A mature set of publications has been developed over many years, available in print and e-book form. What is needed now is to make them available in Excel form as well. All databases will have key tables freely available online by end-2006. The Country data service, launched in 2005, is proving very popular.	Started. The launch of the Factbook in 2005 has meant that for 150 core tables there is a short, accessible, commentary appropriate for all audiences including the informed layman.

⁵ *Optimising Data Accessibility via Reference Metadata Management Principles*, Russell Penlington, OECD, Q2006 Cardiff April 2006. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/events/q2006/downloads/WedSessions1-7.pdf>

Discovery Tools, Index	Linking Tools	Citation Tools
Not ready. A first attempt at an Index was made in 2005. The quality and range of publishing metadata for statistical outputs is poorly developed. Pushing metadata onto other discovery websites is not developed. Statistical metadata are under development to maximize their discoverability by main search engines (like Google).	Not ready. The creation of the StatLink service based on the DOI technology has proved very successful, but it only covers 20 publications.	Not ready. Should be part of the re-launch of SourceOECD due end 2006/early 2007.
Context & comprehension	Alerting services	Re-usability
Not ready. Work to improve metadata for specialist audiences is in hand. OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms needs to be integrated with online services.	Partially ready. E-mail alerts on database updates and new book releases are available via SourceOECD. Out-of-date warnings for Excel spreadsheets not in place.	Partially ready. More and more outputs are available in Excel, a popular format. But more work is needed, especially to create PowerPoint-ready outputs.

50. In conclusion, there is a lot of work remains to be done, although the release of OECD.Stat can directly address several concerns and make easier the creation of ready-made tables for all domains. However, digital products and services are evolving constantly, driven by new possibilities created by IT developments and by evolving user needs. Content, interfaces, discovery tools and user services must constantly change and adapt. It is imperative that the evolution of such services is easily visible from leading user tools, such as Google. It should also be compatible with other publisher's outputs, library IT services and so on: evolving in isolation is not an option.

51. It is clear from the points discussed above that no single solution will fit all audiences' needs. Equally, it would be unwise to attempt to build different services for each niche audience. The key therefore is to concentrate on building a small range of services to meet the needs of the majority of users in the key target audiences. It would also make sense to build on what the OECD already offers rather than try and launch something brand-new for an audience beyond our current reach.

52. From a technical point of view, the main changes already in the pipeline for the next few months are the following:

- *Public access to OECD.Stat* (summer 2006): a selection of all databases will be made available through the Statistics Portal. The full version of OECD.Stat will be made available to subscribers via SourceOECD later in 2006.
- *Release of new SourceOECD* (end 2006/beginning 2007): the new version incorporates new facilities that will improve the accessibility and interpretability of statistical outputs. More ready-made tables will be included in the service.
- *Redesign of the Statistics Portal* (end 2006/beginning 2007): the new version will improve the accessibility to methodological documents and files, will maximise the coherence across domains, etc.

53. With these points in mind, it is proposed that the OECD concentrate on developing three services:

- **OECD Statistics:** horizontal access to all databases as well as vertical access within each database. Supported with detailed metadata, this service would be targeted primarily at users from all audiences who have the skill and time to build and extract data to suit their own needs;
- **OECD Core Data:** comprising key ready-made tables and sub-sets from each vertical database or horizontally from across all databases. A target might be to create 500-1000 of such tables and sub-sets. The service would be targeted primarily at expert users and informed lay users who are time-pressed or lack the skill to build tables themselves.
- **OECD Figures & Facts:** comprising simple tables with commentary. The service would be for a wide audience of journalists, managers, officials and others unskilled or new to international statistics.

7. Access Principles

54. The existing dissemination policies are determined by the Publishing Policy [C(2004)126]. Briefly they can be summed up as follows:

- Where statistical outputs have a definable market, they should be offered for sale
- Pricing should be flexible
- Pricing levels should be high enough to generate sufficient revenues to cover publishing costs; upstream costs are met from regular budgets.

55. Without compromising these Policies, a set of Access Principles could help clarify how access to the three services is managed. Providing the revenues needed to sustain and develop these three publishing services are generated from subscribing institutions the access principles could be:

- Access to Core Tables and Factbook should be freely available to all via Statistics Portal and SourceOECD.
- Access to complete databases should be granted to all requesting individuals on a time-limited basis, no-one should be turned away empty-handed.
- Access to complete databases and e-books should be affordable for institutions (by using flexible prices) and deliver access to end-users on the principle of free-at-the-point-of-use
- Access for those who pay should be supported by training and other added-value services
- Access should be to services that are sustainable from technical, economic and quality angles
- Access should be as local to users as possible, not just from OECD's own websites.

56. These principles should meet Members' concerns about how lay readers and those in non-member countries with few resources get access to OECD's statistical outputs whilst maintaining the current cost-recovery approach to publishing.

8. Financing Development of New Products and the Integrated Dissemination Platform

57. Once agreed on the three services described above (OECD Statistics, OECD Core Data and OECD Figures and Facts) and on the access principles, it has to be recognised that the Organisation needs to invest appropriate resources to transform the plan into a reality. For example, to develop "OECD Statistics" a one-stop service to all databases needs to be developed for users coming via SourceOECD, the Statistics Portal and OLIS; migration from the current Beyond 20/20 technology to the in-house Browser needs to take place, etc. To build the "OECD Core Data" service, existing output formats need to be standardised and branded, reducing the 'noise' of the current offer; links need to be built to take users to

the complete databases and associated reports, etc. Finally, to develop “OECD Figures and Facts”, the collection of 150 tables included in the *Factbook* should be expanded to give a broader range of tables in key themes, drawing on the “At a Glance” titles. In other words, if the Organisation wants to keep its statistical products up to the standards that can both increase their impact in the “information market” and ensure its future revenues, it needs to make an on-going investment.

58. As Donald Waters (Mellon Foundation) wrote in 2004, “Sustainability of digital scholarly resources ... depends on three factors, namely ... a clear definition of the audience and the needs of the users, sensible economies of scale and a well-organised means to manage the resource over time”. OECD already has the necessary ingredients in place because there is already a sustainable flow of revenues from statistical services balancing the day-to-day publishing costs (some €4.5 million annually from a client base of around 800 institutions), the target audiences are identified even if their needs are still only partially met, the system is large enough to generate economies of scale, and the management structure of the Organisation identifies clear roles for the Secretariat and Member countries.

59. However, looking at the experiences of other national and international institutions involved in dissemination and publication of scientific products, there is a clear lesson to learn: these institutions (including Mellon Foundation) not only provide the funding to create and develop dissemination systems, but once up-and-running they re-invest surpluses in continuous development of new products and services. This is where the parallel with the OECD ends, as the Organisation is unable to re-invest any of the income generated from the sales of statistical publications to develop new products and services. In fact, the development of the Statistical Information System has been financed through the Central Priority Fund, while the development of the OECD Factbook was partially supported by the grants provided for the organisation of the World Forum “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy”. Otherwise, developments like SourceOECD depend on squeezing more out of existing resources.

60. To be fully reliable and effective in the medium-long term, the OECD has to change the way in which it finances dissemination platforms and activities. To find additional funds for dissemination activities there are some possible solutions:

- a) Include in the publishing budget (B75) a new item, to be used to invest in dissemination platforms and to develop new products and services;
- b) Allow OECD to re-invest surplus revenues to develop new products;
- c) Voluntary contributions made by Member Countries for particular development projects;
- d) Raise funds from external donors (such as private and public foundations).

61. The first option would ensure an on-going financing, while all other options would be ad-hoc solutions, not ideal when one considers the experience of other institutions and the costs involved in delivering the three services outlined above. Currently, some €4.0 million euros is earned from services provided by the OECD itself for statistical products; €0.5 million is earned from licensing OECD data to third parties. Following the principle established in the current Publishing Policy, the cost of providing the services that earn the €4.0 million is, by definition, covered by the revenues generated, leaving no surplus that could be re-invested. However, the cost of providing data to licensees and managing OECD’s relationship is small: in short, licensing data produces a surplus that could be used to invest in new infrastructures, services and products.

The Committee is invited to express its opinion on these proposals, namely:

- *The taxonomy of OECD statistical products and services;*
- *The access principles;*
- *The approaches to finance new infrastructures, products and services.*

Annex 1. Results of the Benchmarking Study: an overview

In January, PAC commissioned Sabatier Consulting to undertake a review of statistical publishing policies and activities among Member Countries' National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and among International Organisations (IGOs). The objective was to benchmark these against OECD's practices. An overview of the results and the OECD's own position is given below.

Published Outputs in print and on CD-Rom

OECD, in common with other IGOs, continues to see good demand for printed publications (see 3.4, above). NSOs in countries where broadband internet connections are well-established have reduced the number of printed publications on offer, relying instead on PDF e-books. On the other hand, OECD, in common with NSOs, is seeing demand for CD-Roms fall rapidly. IGOs serving developing countries report continuing need for CD-Roms.

	Survey Results	OECD's position
Printed Publications	Virtually all NSOs and IGOs charge for printed publications and plan to continue to do so, perhaps with a smaller number of titles. Pricing is usually on the basis of cost recovery, but the basis of what costs are being recovered varies. The most common is recovery of printing and dispatch costs only.	Very similar, although pricing is market-driven with the aim of covering <u>all</u> publishing costs (editorial, marketing, pre-press, printing, customer service and fulfilment).
CD-Roms	Some NSOs are cutting back or eliminating CD-Roms in favour of online services. However, IGOs, faced with trying to reach audiences in less-developed countries where Internet access is either patchy or expensive, are still producing CD-Roms. Pricing is similar to that of printed publications (recovery of replication and dispatch costs) but some use competitive pricing.	Very similar. Many titles have been consolidated to create thematic CDs and prices were reduced significantly in 2005 (€50-€80), but demand remains very weak.

Publishing Online

OECD, in common with NSOs and IGOs, has moved swiftly to disseminate statistical outputs online. The most common model, used by all organisations, is a mix of 'ready-made' tables (in either PDF, Excel® or HTML formats) and access to databases where users can build their own tables and extract data. Databases are offered in two forms: data sub-sets, where the organisation offers part of a database, or complete service, where all of the data is available.

	Survey Results	OECD's position
Ready-made Tables	Increasingly, NSOs and IGOs are offering "print" publication equivalents online in either PDF or HTML formats. In essence, these are collections of ready-made tables. Initially, these were offered at a discount to the printed publication price, but increasingly they are being made available free-of-charge.	OECD is making more and more tables available free-of-charge in HTML format (e.g. Factbook and Country Data). Some tables are free-of-charge in PDF. PDF equivalents of "print" publications are offered at a 30% discount to the print price.

Online Databases: subsets	Database subsets, usually comprising relatively simple preformatted tables, are usually offered free-of-charge.	Approximately 25% of all OECD statistical data is available free-of-charge in a variety of forms. By the end of 2006 all databases will have subsets freely available. OECD is also creating new, horizontal, sub-sets. E.g. The Factbook and the Country Tables.
Online Databases: complete service	Some organisations offer free access to their databases but put limits on the volume of data that can be extracted. To obtain unlimited access, users either must register first (free-of-charge) or subscribe. The two common business models are: annual subscription, based on the number of users; or pay-as-you-go. Prices range from zero to several thousand euros.	OECD offers free, unlimited, access to 38 databases. For the rest, OECD offers institutions an annual subscription service with no limits on the number of users. Access is free-at-the-point-of-use and does not require users to register or have a password. OECD has a flexible, customer sensitive, pricing policy ranging from €138 to a maximum of €160 for corporate customers.

Other services, Partners and Visibility

These fall into three categories: custom data extraction, advisory services and training. OECD is unique in offering on-site training to its subscribing institutions, something for which there seems to be strong demand. Unlike all other statistical providers, OECD has an extensive network of licensed dissemination and visibility partners.

	Survey Results	OECD's position
Other Products and Services	There are two main types: custom data extraction and research; advisory services. Fees charged are usually linked to the amount of staff time taken.	OECD has started giving subscribing institutions on-site training as part of the subscription fee.
Dissemination and Visibility	Most NSOs rely exclusively on their own distribution channels, few license their data to third parties. Equally, few are taking advantage of visibility channels such as Google Books or supplying publishing metadata tags to other websites to lead users to their statistical outputs. IGOs license their data more widely and use some visibility channels.	OECD has 21 licensed partners channelling statistical publications to their customers. In addition, it has a network of >40 marketing partners and booksellers selling and promoting statistical publications worldwide. All OECD statistical books are included in Google Books and metadata is shared with a variety of other visibility channels.

Free, Fee, Revenues and Budgets

All organisations reported on the tension between the desire to provide more services for free and the need to generate revenues. All are responding by beefing up their free services and many are cutting costs by reducing the number of printed titles. However, most had little revenue to lose and were, in any case, largely covering publishing costs via central budgets. Of the organisations surveyed, only two (Statistics Canada and Statistics Finland) report revenues as large as those earned by the OECD – demonstrating that it is possible to offer a range of free services and earn revenues. In fact, most free services have

restrictions: either limits on the amount of data that can be extracted or requiring personal registration before access is granted. OECD is the only organisation that has put all publishing costs into a separate, transparent, budget.

	Survey Results	OECD's position
Free versus Fee	The proliferation of free information on the internet combined with demands for greater transparency and accessibility from governmental institutions has increased the pressure on NSOs and IGOs to make more of their statistical and other information available online at little or no cost. However, this is counter-balanced by internal pressures to cover the costs of distribution of statistical data. In most cases these efforts are focused only on covering the printing and dispatch costs. In some cases the direct and hidden costs of offering free online statistical databases are also considered – these include customer support, website presentation and database maintenance costs.	OECD is facing the same competing pressures and is responding with a growing range of freely accessible subsets in combination with a sensitively priced ‘full-service’ offer based on the free-at-the-point-of-use model. The costs of publishing (editorial, marketing, pre-press, production, customer service and fulfilment) at OECD are transparent, clearly defined and managed in a separate Annex Budget (Chapter 75).
Revenues	Most organizations report revenues of below €0.85 million annually, with the majority below €0.4 million. However, a few organizations, such as Statistics Canada, report much higher revenues (~€5 million). Statistics Canada takes an aggressive approach to marketing its products and services, including online “Flash” presentations. Statistics Canada makes a good deal of information available free of charge, indicating that a combination of free and fee offerings can deliver meaningful revenue.	OECD earns approximately €4 million from the sale of statistical publications and services. Total income from all publishing activities is approximately €1.5 million.
Organisation & Budgets	The relationship between statistical producers and publishing units varies from one organization to another, so it is difficult to establish any revenue-expense models. What is clear is that in most cases “cost recovery” equates to “printing and dispatch cost” recovery only. Editorial, marketing and administration costs linked to the publishing activity are paid for via other budgets.	On an analytical accounting basis, revenues earned from the sale of publications cover OECD’s <u>full</u> publishing costs (including editorial, marketing, pre-press, printing, customer service and fulfilment).