

Harmonising volume measures for non-market services in the EU – lessons learned from the past and challenges ahead

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Abstract

Eurostat has played in the last decade a very active role in the harmonisation of price and volume measures in national accounts at European level. A particular emphasis has been placed on improvements for non-market services. In 1997, the Eurostat National Accounts Working Group meeting declared the area of non-market services to be the most urgent area for improvement, as the input methods being used were considered to be incomparable and of insufficient quality. It took subsequently several years of discussions in task forces and the above-mentioned Working Group for the countries to agree in majority on the type of output methods that should be used instead. In 2002, a formal decision was taken to implement output methods for individual services like health and education at the latest in 2006.

A major topic in the harmonisation of volume measures is the measurement of quality changes. Eurostat pursued the work and, in particular, organised a workshop on the issue of quality in November 2007.

This paper analyzes the discussion and developments on this topic over the last decade, including on the intricate links between output, outcome and quality. It then analyses some lessons learned by Eurostat during this process and discusses the challenges ahead.