

W O R K S H O P



Estatísticas do Comércio:
a realidade presente
e os novos desafios



WORKSHOP "TRADE STATISTICS: PRESENT REALITY AND FUTURE CHALLENGES"

KEY POINTS

1. The purpose of the «Workshop» was to discuss the reality of statistics in the trade sector, bringing together their producers and users. In fact, it was not intended to reach conclusions, but rather to raise a number of issues providing food for thought, namely at the level of the *Conselho Superior de Estatística* (Statistical Council) (hereinafter referred to as the Council).
2. Therefore, the main concepts underlying consensus among participants were:
 - a) The existence of significant gaps in statistical information on the trade sector in Portugal, which is the source of the inadequate databases available;
 - b) The need for an institutional entity (the Working Group "Trade and Services" of the Council) that may examine the existing situation, define priorities and formulate practical proposals with a view to the gradual improvement of the current situation.
3. At the level of the different interventions in the workshop, a number of considerations are listed below, which may warrant particular attention by the Council:
 - a) The absence of reliable files at the level of the **local unit** (the Register of the *Direcção Geral das Actividades Económicas (DGAE)* (Directorate-

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General for Economic Activities) faces problems related to information updates) requires special investment in this field. A number of entities with relevant information (namely local government) are required to cooperate, privileging the use of administrative sources;

- b) The works to be developed in the production of these files require geo-referenced data and the encoding of the "local unit" allowing for the simultaneous use of different administrative sources;
- c) The implementation of this work should take into account medium and long term, i.e. it should ensure the regular update of the information collected. Work may be developed in stages, in line with a selection of "pilot regions";
- d) It is essential to involve the municipal associations and local councils in the debate, wherefore the Working Group of the Council shall promote meetings with both interlocutors;
- e) The existence of a marked contrast between Portugal and Spain at the level of statistical products made available. Stress was laid on the absence of a "margin index" in Portugal and on the discontinuance by DGAE of the collection of prices in local units, carried out until very recently (these fields are developed by the corresponding Spanish entity);
- f) The problem with how statistical information is disseminated by Statistics Portugal was the object of analysis from a dual perspective: the dissemination media used (absence of a summary publication on the sector – of the yearbook type) and the data breakdown levels



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(namely to differentiate the various typologies/group classes of the surveyed units);

- g) The survey to the relevant business units is presently the only trade-specific statistical product of Statistics Portugal with annual/pluriannual frequency. It does not permit to monitor the development of other types of business establishments (the discontinuance of the survey to shopping centres worsened this situation), impairing the characterisation of the evolution of the sector and the current trends.

4. By way of conclusion, we highlight:

- The eagerness for dialogue and debate between institutions and individuals on the theme of the workshop (in spite of the deficit in participation by associations);
- The notion that the problems are not merely financial (more or less funding), but that it is possible to bring about greater and better commitment, provided there is political will and institutional cooperation;
- The express commitment of the public entities present in the event – especially Statistics Portugal – to analyse and possibly implement the proposals that will eventually be formulated.