PROPOSED SCHEME FOR AN EGYPTIAN M/SMEs POLICY INFORMATION SYSTEM

PART1: SURVEY OF M/SMEs INFORMATION SYSTEM & PORTALS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND IDRC

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PART I SURVEY OF SMEs INFORMATION SYSTEM IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

I. Introduction:

Fiani & Partners / Kompass Egypt was contracted by the Canadian International Development Research Center (IDRC) to prepare a comprehensive report on the optimum SMEs policy information system for Egypt. The first part of this project focuses on surveying the existing statistical information on a sample of 7 countries as well as the existing M/SMEs portal on a sample of 10 countries to use them as a case study to be compared to the current policy information system for M/SMEs in Egypt.

In this first part of phase I, we have monitored up to seven countries who have developed M/SME information monitoring systems and more than ten countries who have developed M/SMEs portals in addition to a number of multicountry M/SMEs portals. Indeed, such approach is key to allow policy making to adopt the appropriate methods for Egypt in the light of successes and failures of other countries.

Summary of Overall Objectives:

- Support the Egyptian Government and the Ministry of Foreign Trade (MFT) in their national objective of assisting M/SMEs as the core for the country’s development.
- The main aim of the Canadian program is to identify the needed policies, legislation and regulations in order for the Egyptian Government to monitor and support the SMEs and the services designed for them.
- Within this scope, the issue of qualitative and quantitative information is essential as Egypt is discovering the scarcity of information available as well as the importance of a proper dissemination.
- At the level of M/SMEs, the lack of reliable information is one of many limitations facing the development of this sector and without which, no effective or appropriate policy can be developed.
- The information needs have been defined as:
  - Data covering M/SMEs population
  - Data covering M/SMEs services
  - Data covering business performance of M/SMEs
- The analysis of the information needed to support the policy formation system, indicates the necessity to address both, the “content” of information needed, as well as the channels of collecting and disseminating such information.
- As such, the types of information in terms of contents and channels are:
  - Information on M/SMEs as a target segment in terms of statistics and on-going monitoring through dynamic databases
  - Information on M/SMEs services versus M/SMEs needs and quality of information and access to such services
  - "Bottom-up" channels of information to allow feed-back from M/SMEs which will allow monitoring of business performance and evaluation of services.
M/SMEs "knowledge exchange tools" for both institutions involved in M/SMEs support programs and the M/SMEs themselves in terms of access to services and business opportunities. These are best represented by the "M/SMEs portals"
II. Methodology

1. Country selection

   a) Concerning the foreign countries M/SMEs statistical information analysis

   The survey focused on a sample of 7 countries, whereas the selection was based on the countries having the most developed information systems, together with securing a representative sample of all areas and countries which size can relate to Egypt; as such, a country like USA was eliminated from our study as it cannot be compared to Egypt.
   
   The selected countries are:

   - Developed markets: (France, Canada, Italy, United Kingdom)
   - Developing markets: (India, Bulgaria, Korea)

2. Analysis

   We have covered all aspect of M/SMEs policies, even if out of scope of phase I of the project as this analysis could be useful for the overall program, these aspects include general mechanism of M/SMEs, logistics and legal aspects, policy developments and support services offered to M/SMEs.

3. Process

   - As the nature of issues raised varies between each country and the other, depending on the stage of maturity development of M/SME policies and corresponding support services, we have prepared comparative profiles among the 7 countries to allow proper analysis.
   - We are also enclosing a copy of the reports collected on each of the 7 countries.
   - We have as well enriched our analysis with the studies published by known centers of excellence on M/SMEs such as the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank and the UNIDO’s M/SME operations department. As such for some issues or needs, we have added examples or cases beyond the seven monitored countries.
   - Moreover, we are providing an in-depth analysis of the French case, which is considered as the international model for statistics.

4. Focus

   In terms of M/SMEs definition, the one applying to Egypt will be further assessed in successive parts of the study, however as per IDRC’s request, the study will focus on entities with 5 to 50 employees as:

   - The number of employees is the ratio most used worldwide and the most accessible in Egypt to classify companies, although fear from high taxes pushes any company big or small to declare lesser employees than the reality.
   - Focus starts from 5 persons, as too small entities are considered by IDRC not to have the potential to develop and thus create the growth generation needed.
   - According to the World Bank, M/SMEs definition is broken down as follows:
- Micro enterprise: up to 10 employees, total assets up to $100,000 and total annual sales of up to $100,000
- Small enterprise: up to 50 employees, total assets of up to $3 million and total sales of up to $3 million
- Medium enterprise: up to 300 employees, total assets and total sales up to $15 million

b) Concerning the foreign countries seven multilateral M/SMEs portals

We have analyzed all the portals and websites in relation to statistical data or M/SMEs of the seven countries presented in the "Case Studies" section and selected to present the most significative ones, i.e., 5 countries and 6 portal, whereas each of these portals is considered the main website / portal representing the country's M/SMEs or statistical model. In addition, we present 4 multilateral portals, i.e., not representing one country only, but rather representing a group of countries or M/SMEs Globally.

1. Country Selection

Although in our original assignment we were supposed to present only country's portals, i.e., portal presenting only one country, we believe that multilateral portals are also of great importance for M/SMEs, especially in the globalization era and the increase in free trade agreements. Below is the list of portals analyzed, taking into consideration that we analyzed 6 portals of 5 of the seven countries studies in the first part of this report, while one portal was taken as an example from each country, we analyzed 2 portals from France as both are representative of a quality statistical information portal, in addition to being user friendly. We have as well added the US M/SMEs portal, considering the importance of the SBA model.

- The Canadian portal Strategis: www.strategis.com
- The French portal INSEE: www.insee.fr
- the UK's portal SBS: www.sbs.gov.uk
- The Indian portal SIDO: www.smallindustryindia.com
- The American portal SBA: www.sba.org
- The Korean portal: www.smba.com
- 5 multilateral portals

2. Analysis

Each of the selected country portal is considered the country's number one portal on M/SMEs statistics. In our analysis, we were aiming at identifying the following:

1. the role of the portal
2. the portal's creators and/or managers
3. the structure of services or information provided in that portal

In the course of the analysis, the value of Multicountry portal for Egypt's future M/SMEs portal, appeared as a major question to bring forward:

- On one hand the contents and structure of these Multicountry portals is a valuable guide and source of new concepts to develop for Egypt; specially that the mono-country portals are practically similar
- On the other hand, the study of these portals and preparing Egypt's M/SMEs participation and linkage to them is essential in today's international challenges.

3. Process

- The pattern in what concerns the M/SMEs portal is very similar to the one related to the M/SMEs statistical data described above.
- We are enclosing as well the address of each of the portals selected.
III. Findings

1. General comments

a) Concerning the statistical data systems:

- Although analysis of the 7 countries selected as well as of other countries known for their successful M/SMEs policies such as Italy, indicates that the countries with the best economic information and statistical systems such as France for example, are not necessarily the ones with the most successful M/SMEs sector. Italy is the best example for such situation. This would indicate that a successful M/SMEs sector depends as much from a conductive business environment, such as the business culture, effective decentralization and a thriving private sector liberated from government intervention.

- However, in the case of Egypt and considering the lack of harmonized statistics and the opportunity to fund the establishment of a comprehensive information system to support the M/SMEs policy, it is recommended to adopt the model of countries with a comprehensive M/SMEs statistical system.

- Furthermore, analysis indicates also that countries with efficient economic statistics tend to have as well optimum M/SMEs statistical output. As such, the quality and availability of M/SMEs economic information is often a by-product of a country's statistical system. Moreover, countries may not separate the statistical monitoring of the M/SMEs from their overall surveillance of all companies, while deriving from such results, either specific surveys or programs for their M/SMEs.

- There is currently an international trend towards the globalization of M/SMEs knowledge and best practices, such as INSME club (the International SME Network" located in Italy and to which India is affiliated), there is as well an M/SMEs NGO launched in India and now with international activities, i.e., WASME, which is becoming a reference in this field. Thus there is a need for Egypt to create initiatives to take part in this trend.

- The M/SMEs sector monitoring is also affected by the globalization trend, as such, the standardization of M/SMEs statistical criteria and definition is being enforced at the level of the large trading blocks such as the EU and its trading partners in the South Mediterranean and East Europe. This is also a prerequisite for the implementation of M/SMEs development policies such as subcontracting across borders.

b) Concerning the portals

- Concerning M/SMEs service provisions, there is a major role for multinational institutions such as the World Bank, the IFC and the UNIDO, who are playing a very important part in the developing countries. Indeed, these institutions had as a primary goal to assist the growth of developing countries for which they have adopted the strengthening of M/SMEs services provision as the core of the programs promoted by these institutions. India was among the first countries to host these programs and obviously among the countries who benefited the most and thus managed to have a successful M/SMEs sector with their help.

- Information on the services offered to SMEs by national or local agencies are often in the form of guidance or tips towards various national programs, services or policies that are offered to M/SMES and the various methods to acquire these services. Whereas the international organizations are reporting
on the M/SMEs services they sponsor through macro-economic reports discussing M/SMEs issues from an analytical point of view and not in terms of data of practical use to an M/SME.

- The dissemination of M/SMEs statistical information, as well as access to M/SMEs services is increasingly done via internet whether websites or portals, although traditional media or business events (exhibitions, etc...) continue to be used.

- There are two identified types of portals, the first being directed towards statistics, where information on M/SMEs is included, the second being directed towards M/SMEs services, whether through offering various information and statistical services, business matchmaking, etc.

- All analyzed portals were more or less covering the same aspects, what really varied was the presentation of the information itself and how user friendly it might be. The services that are offered to M/SMEs through these portals fall into 3 categories, the first is offering information and statistical services on M/SMEs, such as statistical publications, the second is offering guiding tips or information on aspects related to creation and/or survival of M/SMEs, covering aspects such as the legal environment, tips on the most effective marketing tools, links to specialized networks, tips on export promotion with its related links, identification of training needs of the entrepreneurs and links to training specialists. The third category focuses on the database of M/SMEs them selves that are registered in the portal, the access of this database via the web permits the users to identify and contact each other as basis for future cooperation among those M/SMEs. As a preliminary conclusion, and considering that Egypt M/SMEs portal should benefit from the experience of other countries, the plan should thus include comprehensive contents combining the 3 types of websites described above, i.e., statistics, services, and database. Parallely, the attention should be on developing the most effective mechanism and classification of these contents to make it a user-friendly portal.

2. The importance of M/SMEs statistical model according to international standards

Definition of a Statistical Organization

Statistical agencies are service organizations, their reason for existing, growing, and making a visible contribution to the affairs of their government and society is rooted in their capacity to provide information for the solution of important issues. However, priorities can change more rapidly than the agency's capacity to modify its productive effort.

A strong position of independence is essential for a statistical organization to establish credibility among its users and to create a relationship of mutual respect and trust. Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating statistical information should always be distinct from policy making activities.

The statistical needs of the business

It is generally accepted that the businesses interest in quantitative information is of a same nature, where as businesses are interested in finding how many

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1Source: Handbook of Statistical Organization, Third Edition: The Operation and Organization of a statistical Agency
businesses like theirs’ exist, methods of comparison between businesses, prospects of the business, etc...

To provide an answer for these questions, the statistical agency must first define and categorize businesses from a statistical point of view, the definition should be as wide as possible, so that the sampling techniques can be used effectively and the seemingly insoluble problems of accurate coding can be overcome.

The next challenge would then be to select the attributes that must be compared to satisfy the interests of business. In principle, all economic variables are potential subject to comparison. Thus, the number of employed per unit of revenue and per unit of profit, the structure of costs, the size of the market measured in number of customers and in gross revenue, the composition of the market in terms of purchasers at home and abroad, the return of capital invested, the rate of product innovation, and the prices quoted are all examples of important M/SMEs Sector trends.

Of all these variables, and in most lines of business in the countries surveyed, the two that gather the highest focus are the rate at which prices are adjusted to conditions of overall and specific demand and the rate at which the products or services of a business are influenced by technical and organizational innovation.

**Statistical needs of M/SMEs**

Satisfying the information needs of small business is the greatest challenge for business statistics for a number of reasons:

- The ratio of effort deployed in answering requests for information – regulatory and statistical --from the government to the economic size of businesses is much higher for small than for large businesses. The ratio is almost as high as that for households.
- In addition, even when the need for information is well formulated, the specifications tend to be so detailed—in terms of what the business does, where it is located, and with whom it wishes to be compared—that the statistical agency finds it difficult to comply with any professionally acceptable degree of reliability.
- The third reason has to do with the nature of small business needs for information—even though they tend to require highly specific statistics, small businesses may be reluctant to comply with all of government’s demands for detailed information because devoting the necessary time and resources would significantly add to overall costs.

The statistical agency will find it very difficult to accommodate small business needs if it does not have access to key administrative records and the ability to use them for statistical purposes.

However, small businesses are the recognized engine for growth. They are numerous, play a key role in the service sector and, are given a large share of credit for innovation, particularly in the dynamic activities that characterize a modern economy; and, according to some, play a key role in job creation, particularly in the early phases of a cyclical upswing. For these reasons, their wishes must factor into the dissemination program of a statistical agency.

There are two aspects to meeting the information needs of small businesses, both of which affect organization—the information itself and training small-business to use the information to their advantage. (For example, one of the most significant barriers to the survival of small businesses is gaining access to credit on affordable terms, and to do so, they must demonstrate how their costs and gross profits compare with those of their competitors). Thus, what is of prime interest to them is not averages and totals but rather the distribution of key ratios and
where they fit in. Examples of such ratios are; equity to credit; and accounts receivable to total revenue.

Using a table with distributions of key ratios may be intimidating at first, particularly for some entrepreneurs who are apt to trust their intuition or salesmanship more than unfamiliar arrays of numbers. For this reason, the statistical agency may wish to offer seminars for small business managers and take advantage of trade fairs and similar events to display its relevant products.

The demographic characteristics of markets are also of interest to businesses of any size, particularly those who cater to the final consumers or to freelancers who work from home. The age, gender, family, and income attributes of the population in very small areas are of the utmost importance to them, but they may not have the knowledge or the confidence to approach a statistical agency and request cross-tabulations derived from the census of population. In order to cater to those wishes, statistical agencies may have to utilize specialized consultants who can estimate potential sales of a wide range of articles on the basis of a combination of small-area census variables and the results of the latest survey of family expenditure. Among the main activities of the future statistical agency that would specialize in small business concerns, the following are the most practiced:

- Maintaining expertise in the handling of administrative records so as to satisfy current demands either exclusively or primarily with the information they contain
- Organizing events of interest to small business and using them as opportunities to disseminate extracts of existing databases and to assist small businesses in the effective use of statistical publications
- Championing small-business claims for limitations on the paperwork burden generated by government in general
- Serving as permanent liaison between the statistical agency and such agencies as social security, indirect taxation, and customs.

**Europe: A harmonized statistical structure**

A particularly important issue for Egypt in its effort to upgrade its economic information system is the need to acknowledge the future harmonized statistical system designed for the members of the Euromed agreement, which Egypt is part of.

One of the main key issues addressed in the European Union is the creation of one statistical model, to be followed by all European countries, where any additions or innovations are done locally in each country but within the main structure of statistics.

Democratic societies do not function properly without a solid basis of reliable and objective statistics. On one hand, decision-makers at EU level, in Member States, in local government and in business need statistics to make those decisions. On the other hand, the public and media need statistics for an accurate picture of contemporary society and to evaluate the performance of politicians and others. Of course, national statistics are still important for national purposes in Member States whereas EU statistics are essential for decisions and evaluation at European level.
MEDSTAT, a harmonized statistical framework in the Euro-Mediterranean zone

MEDSTAT is a program launched by the EU to support the statistical development of the countries in the Mediterranean zone part of the EU Free Trade Agreement.

a) Eurostat was established in 1953 to meet the requirements of the Coal and Steel Community. Over the years its task has broadened and when the European Community was founded in 1958 it became a Directorate-General (DG) of the European Commission. Eurostat’s key role is to supply statistics to other DGs and supply the Commission and other European Institutions with data so they can define, implement and analyse Community policies.

The result: Eurostat offers a whole range of important statistical data that governments, businesses, the education sector, journalists and the public can use for their work and daily life.

With the development of Community policies, Eurostat’s role has changed. Today, collecting data for EMU and developing statistical systems in candidate countries for EU membership are more important than ten years ago.

Eurostat’s main role is to process and publish comparable statistical information at European level, trying to arrive at a common statistical ‘language’ that embraces concepts, methods, structures and technical standards. Eurostat does not – however - collect data. This is done in Member States by their statistical authorities. They verify and analyze national data and send them to Eurostat.

Eurostat’s role is to consolidate the data and ensure they are comparable, using harmonized methodology and is actually the only provider of statistics at European level and the data issued is harmonized as far as possible.

One example: for an accurate picture of EU unemployment it is important that unemployed people in Finland or Portugal are counted or measured in the same way as in Ireland or Germany. So Eurostat works with Member States to define common methodology on unemployment or asks Member States to include appropriate questions when gathering national data. These EU data are then sent to Eurostat to publish EU-wide unemployment data, which can then be used to compare unemployment rates between countries.

With the birth of the euro there is a need to measure the development of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) the Euro as compared with other currencies such as the dollar and yen. This has fuelled the harmonization of methodology between Member States. Just as there is one inflation rate and one GDP rate for the USA, Eurostat now publishes economic indicators for the whole euro-zone.

b) MEDSTAT program, launched in 1996, is being managed by EuropeAid Cooperation Office, has been set to promote cooperation on statistics in order to harmonize methods and exchange data as it's main goal, as economic policies can never be implemented without reliable statistics.

MEDSTAT started with a 20 million Euro – five years – grant, while the second phase of the program (MEDSTAT II) was granted 30 million Euro for the period 2002-2005.

Raising awareness among policy-makers at the highest level is one of the aims of MEDSTAT, whereas several seminars have been held in Malta, Tunisia and Munich raising the issue of the role of the development of statistics, and good governance and human rights, which are of interest to policy makers.

1Source: Euromed’s Special Feature No. 30 on The Medstat Regional Programme
**SDDS program sponsored by the IMF**

Another statistical rationalization initiative of importance to Egypt is the program promoted by the IMF, the Special Data Dissemination Standard. This program is under discussion with the Ministry of Planning aims at providing Egypt with guidance to improving statistical practice such as timeliness, transparency, access to public and quality of the data.

Although the analysis of the Egyptian statistical output concerning M/SMEs is related to the second part of the study, it is important to highlight here the need for Egypt to develop its M/SMEs statistical model according to international standards. Such standards should be selected as well on the basis of Egypt's interest and thus the country's with which it is having trade relation and/or aiming to develop larger cooperation.
IV. Countries Case Study
1. Case study of France

This study is based on in-depth interviews of the Information Directors of the Industrial Statistics & Studies Services Division and the Authority for Commercial, Handicraft and Services Enterprises.

We believe that France is a good model to study in-depth due to several reasons:

a) France is giving a great emphasis on both statistics in its raw form as well as analysis and surveys. France has a solid base of companies database which enhances the statistics related to the M/SMEs.

b) France is managing its statistical system through a sectoral approach, as such, the M/SMEs statistics are generally covered on a per sector basis.

c) The concentration of the statistical responsibility into one body which its specific job is to set statistical standards, implement programs as well as liaison between all related agencies.

The statistical culture:

The analysis of SME statistics and monitoring in the different countries indicate that the quality of SME statistics and/or monitoring is directly related to the country's statistical culture. Indeed, historically countries and developed markets have started developing their statistical tools at a macro level, as the concept of M/SMEs and the awareness to their importance to the development of any country is relatively recent. As such, the SMEs statistics and economic monitoring is in most cases a by-product of the country's overall economic monitoring.

France is considered among the world model in statistical know-how and performance. "The Economist" magazine – for example – quoted in an article that the French national statistics institute (INSEE) is a world model and that the statistics produced in particular on the service sector are among the best of the world, if not the best.

The main characteristic of the French model is that the INSEE has created an in-house statistical school which, besides training statisticians from all over the world, has above all trained all the statisticians working in the different French ministries and institutions.

This common culture and common language is considered the main reason behind the success and development of statistical tools in France. Historically, the French INSEE was created after the second World War and at that time the focus was on reconstructing the country and thus on the industrial sector almost exclusively.

It should be noted that up till now, the industrial SMEs surveyed in France start at 20 employees +, and that studies are conducted on the industrial sector as a whole, or industry specific rather than for the SMEs specifically versus the large companies, which indicates that a sectoral approach based on an industrial strategy continues to be France's main policy in terms of M/SMEs support.

It is only in 1972 that the first statistics on non-industrial sector where implemented following which in 1981 started the implementation of annual surveys & statistical analysis of the service sector.
**Definition of SMEs:**

The specialists interviewed in France at the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry and in charge of the industrial sector and the services and M/SMEs sector have both confirmed the major importance of setting a clear definition of the M/SMEs as a base for proper statistics and further, policies. This of course implies that companies do report exact figures and we are presenting further on the tools used in France to motivate companies to report accurately.

An important point to mention here is the decision taken by France in 1993, then in 1996 to adopt the European Union Classification and definition of M/SMEs. Indeed these regulations (see reference below) will be applied by the EU to all their partners, which means that as Egypt is now part of the EU Free Trade Zone, that it is very important to prepare from now the application of the EU definitions in general and concerning the M/SMEs in particular.

The general outline of the EU M/SMEs classification categories varies per type of activity, for example 10 employees is an M/SMEs in the industrial sector but can be a medium company in the services sector, such as consulting.

Moreover, the main criteria used in France to monitor the different activities sector, and as well the M/SMEs is the criteria of added value.

*The core M/SMEs classification adopted by France:*

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<th>Classification</th>
<th>Employees Range</th>
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<td>TPE (très petites entreprises) or Micro(^1)</td>
<td>From zero to 9 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Enterprise</td>
<td>10 to 49 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>50 to 249 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large company</td>
<td>Above 250 employees</td>
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\(^1\)In the industrial sector and according to the sector, the TPE or Micro can be from Zero to 19, covered in two separate segments: 0 to 9 and 10 to 19 employees.

It is important to note that in the industrial sector, the SMEs are considered to cover from 20 to 500 employees.

An important aspect of the M/SMEs sector profile, which has appeared recently through more refined surveys on the ownership of the SMEs sector is that the main profile of the SME sector is changing through their acquisition by large groups. In other words, a pattern is recently appearing, whereas a good number of SMEs remain within an SME structure as independent entities, whereas they are bought by groups who federate several SMEs based on horizontal or vertical strategies, while maintaining them as independent structures.
Framework

Institutions in charge of business and M/SMEs statistics:

1. INSEE

Statistics

The national French statistics institute (INSEE) is the sole body implementing all statistics in France for all sectors. This takes place at the level of (raw data) and macro economic statistics.
In the same time, statistics are considered in France as being intrinsically related to economic studies. Indeed, the French statistical school stresses the importance of linking statistics to economic studies, in order to obtain at both ends a richer and more refined product. This is done through two main channels; on one hand the INSEE implements a number of economic studies and surveys, and on the other hand, the economic surveys implemented in different ministries and in public/private institutions are made in full coordination with the INSEE.
In other words, at the level of ministries, the INSEE is acting as the main contractor and general coordinator, where as specific surveys are sub-contracted to the former.
Such cooperation is of course enabled by the fact that most information managers of those different miniseries have been trained at the INSEE and thus speak the same language.

Databases

In addition to the function of producing statistics and economic surveys, the INSEE also manages a number of national databases from which specific M/SMEs surveys are generated.

a) The National ID Roaster of Companies called "SIRENE". This is a unique ID number of each company, which is independent from the commercial registry and is automatically generated or updated on each contact of any given M/SME with a government agency. For example, assuming that an SME may not have registered itself or updated its data, it's relation to the French Social Insurance body or the VAT agency automatically generate the creation of this unique ID code and updates the data related to the company. SIRENE identifies the following:

- Physical persons exerting independently a non-salaried profession, (such as traders or physicians)
- State institutions and services agencies at national and regional level
- Establishments with a commercial registry
- The National ID Roaster of Electors

b) The National Roaster of classification of activities and profession categories

Surveys

As indicated, the INSEE is the national body in charge of defining the scope of the national surveys, which complement and refine the statistical data. Such surveys are implemented by the INSEE whenever there is no specific ministry in charge of a particular issue or segment of the population. For example, one of the well known annual surveys implemented by INSEE is on the French households, and because the Secretary of State for M/SMEs is recently created, the INSEE
continues to implement every 3 years a national survey on the M/SMEs of Zero to 19 employees.

Parallely, the INSEE defines the scope of the national surveys implemented by specific ministries or agencies. As such, among the main bodies applying such system is the following 3 government agencies producing yearly surveys, which include M/SMEs activities monitoring. These are:

- SESSI: related to the Ministry of Industry and producing all surveys related to the industrial sector, including the industrial SMEs.
- SCEES: related to the Ministry of Agriculture producing all surveys related to all agricultural activities including the agricultural M/SMEs
- Secretary of State for Commerce, Services and M/SMEs

It should be noted that these 3 organizations which represent the bulk of the activity sectors, implement sectoral and / or national surveys each in their respective categories of which the M/SMEs are an integral part and get identified through the segmentation of the companies in each respective activity sector or region.

However, each of these 3 organizations rely on the database of companies maintained at the level of the statistical institute INSEE. Indeed, the inquiries conducted confirm the necessity to have a companies' database for both M/SMEs and large companies as a compulsory condition for any proper statistical work, being understood that such database must be updated and maintained consultancy.

The INSEE portal is also considered a model of web-based statistical data dissemination which includes the M/SMEs sector as presented further in the study.

The legal framework of national statistics and surveys

The analysis conducted has highlighted the importance of a clear legal framework to secure the quality of national statistics and surveys:

- Indeed, the presence of a legal framework supply the obligation for individuals and companies to respond to inquiries while it guarantees in the same time their privacy rights.
- It appears that most countries have established a legal framework for the collection of data and processing of statistics. This point is particularly interesting to mention and to highlight for further studies as the Egyptian government is sponsoring the preparation of an information law, presently prepared by the ruling party.
- In France, 3 national bodies have been established to manage and implement the legal framework of information handling:
  a) CNIS; National Council for Statistical Information. It operates as a sort of national assembly, where all the stakeholders of the civic society are represented, i.e., a total of 160 members in average. It's role is to debate of all questions pertaining to information, and specifically economic information. The program of the national surveys is decided at the level of CNIS.
  b) INPI: National Institute for Industrial Property. It is in charge of supervising the collection of the balance sheets (annual) of all companies and making them available to any party. Indeed, several private companies have established agreements with the agencies in charge of receiving and archiving companies' results, i.e., chambers of commerce and commercial courts. Such service is made available since almost 15 years on the French local telephone network (Minitel).
c) CPCI; Permanent Commission for Industrial Coordination. This body provides the cooperation framework between the four main stakeholders supervising the industrial sector. These are the Ministry of Industry, the Central Bank of France, the statistical institute INSEE and MEDEF (the large companies representative body).

**Analysis of the Industrial M/SMEs Statistical Agency (SESSI)**

The SESSI (Industrial Studies & Statistical Services) related to the division of Industry, IT & Telecommunications within the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry is implementing on a yearly basis complete surveys on all the industrial sector including the industrial M/SMEs, in addition to specific studies and a range of publications and the promotion of an information culture.

*Surveys produced*

- **EB:** these are sectoral inquiries as the approach of the SESSI is to survey a whole sector in order to supply to the State and to the sector an updated benchmark to monitor their activity, and to develop the appropriate industrial strategy and the corresponding national policies. These surveys are exhaustive covering all companies of each sector, whereas some are implemented on a monthly basis, and in such cases, on a selected sample only.
- **EAE:** an annual survey of all industrial companies. This survey includes the industrial SMEs, which are analyzed within each specific sector. This survey also includes the analysis of the structure of these companies as well as the production and sales volumes, etc. Each activity has a questionnaire specific to its sector as the SESSI tries to combine the range of questions which can portrait as accurately as possible the industrial sector concerned.

*Additional surveys*

The SESSI also produces during the year's additional surveys, taken from horizontal samples and not industry specific as they are related to specific issues of interest to the country.
For example, among the subjects regularly covered during the past decade, the question of innovation and how it is applied in the companies and as well the issue of the competitiveness of French companies in overseas markets.

It should be noted that these surveys are extensive and expensive and considered as an industrial process in their own right.

*Information dissemination activity*

1. To institutions:

The dissemination to institutions is based on several documents:
- The surveys themselves are printed and distributed to the national bodies and stakeholders.
- More importantly, the SESSI produces regularly summaries in different formats which get distributed as well to institutions and to the companies themselves. These are for example:
  - A monthly industrial barometer
  - Sectoral surveys both extensive as well as 4 page summaries
  - Subject specific detailed reports and / or 4 page summaries
2. To Companies and SMEs

The SESSI is very much aware (and in fact even more than the Secretary of State to SMEs) of the need to raise the awareness of companies and specially SMEs to the importance and the use of information and in particular statistics.

a) Promoting the supply of information

- To secure the cooperation of companies, a copy of the surveys is automatically supplied to each company and SME interviewed.
- They have now reached 95% response to their questionnaires, which are sent by mail and therefore filled in writing.
- Their policy is to visit the companies who do not respond, the incentive used to obtain such results are several:
  - There is a penalty in case of not responding, (however it is not very expensive).
  - These surveys are implemented within and by the Ministry in charge of the Industrial sector, as such, companies are always keen to maintain good relations with their ministry.
  - Moreover, it is the same Ministry who decides on the financial assistance provided to these companies.
  - Finally, the fact that the surveys are being sent to each company inquired, is providing them a tool to better manage their business.
  - Moreover, the SESSI implements a range of actions explaining to the companies the assistance and support they are providing to the sector, as follows.

b) Promoting the use of economic information

Recently, the SESSI has been developing a new policy towards the companies, i.e., building up the spirit of partnership versus the previous top-down relation and regal attitude. Their objective is to promote the concepts of information and awareness to business intelligence, as the studies implemented by the SESSI and / or other institutes have indicated that the French businessmen think more in terms of technologies, whereas their Anglo-Saxon colleagues are focused on business intelligence.

Among the tools used by the SESSI to promote the use of business intelligence:

- Partnership with organizers of professional exhibitions, whereas they manage information centers in the exhibition and produce surveys on the sectors covered by the exhibition.
- Seminars and workshops all over France to train managers to economic information and how to use it. They even created training packages for the schools of engineers.
- Close cooperation with the librarians in the universities and research centers.
Analysis of the Secretary of State to SMEs for Commerce & Services Information Agency

Surveys produced

This agency is relatively recent, as such, benefits from a limited number of qualified staff. Thus, as indicated above, the national statistics on the micro and small companies continue to be produced by the INSEE. However, the awareness to the lack of information specific to the M/SMEs was acknowledged recently and a series of surveys on the M/SMEs sector was initiated 3 years ago. These surveys are now published every year and cover the following sectors:

- Commerce
- Services
- Liberal professions
- Handicraft professions

The SMEs are included in each sector as per in the industrial surveys. However, 2 main surveys specific to the SME sector have been launched by this agency.

1. Yearly survey on the status of financial assistance provided to the SMEs
2. A new study published for the first time in 2002, and to be from there on updated each year and related to the key figures of the M/SME sector

In addition to the sectoral studies, specific surveys are produced and subcontracted by the secretary of state to private consultants. Examples of such surveys:

- Monitoring impact of incentives to the creation of companies
- Surveying M/SMEs who have disappeared and the reason beyond that
- Monitoring the simplification of administrative procedures.
- The cost – as an example – for a sample of 600 SMEs is the equivalent of 200,000 LE.

Procedures and methodology

In general terms, the non-industrial sector until this moment is less covered and analyzed than the industrial sector in France. As such, this newly created secretary of state for M/SMEs is basing their M/SMEs surveys on the available statistical resources and databases maintained by the main economic agencies. These are mainly 3 sources:

1. The SIRENE: the companies' database\(^1\) maintained by the statistical institute INSEE.
2. Tax department: mainly from the VAT agency within the Ministry of Finance. The new VAT legislation exempts micro companies from VAT, but these represent 1% only of the national added value, and therefore, they optimize the statistical results by neglecting these companies.
3. Tax Department and Social Insurance Agency: the information on the turnover and personnel professional qualifications within the SMEs are further obtained from these 2 agencies.

\(^1\)The main information contained in this database is the company's address, legal form and number of employees, as indicated, it offers the unique advantage of giving a unique ID code to any given company and gets automatically updated through each contact of any given company with a state agency.
Dissemination

a) Coordination of different agencies

The Secretary of State for SMEs, having as indicated limited facilities is acting as a coordinator of a number of initiatives, both private and public in what concerns SMEs surveys.

Examples of private initiatives

These are mainly done by large chartered accountant offices, specialized in the SME sector:

1. Fiducial "www.fiducial.fr"
   This auditing firm provides services to average of 80,000 companies. As such, they produce every quarter a survey, which they distribute free of charge.

2. Other initiatives are coming from certified accounting centers who manage the accounts of up to 400,000 SMEs and also produce regular surveys

Examples of public initiatives

Most state agencies surveys are industry specific as they relate to the development or monitoring of sectoral strategies. As such, they do not implement regular horizontal coverage of the companies, i.e., of the SME sector in particular. In most cases, if the need for a specific question related to SMEs prevails, they add questions to the questionnaire concerning the companies with less than 20 employees.

b) Promotion to companies

The Secretary of State to SMEs - being more recent – has not yet organized efficient dissemination to the SMEs:

- They publish their surveys on the Web
- These surveys get published at average 20,000 copies and distributed free to all institutions and to companies who request it. However, they consider that their direct coverage of SMEs is not very efficient yet.
- The main promotion of their surveys is done through a close cooperation with the different companies providing consulting services to SMEs, using them as channels of communications with their common clients, the M/SMEs.

Monitoring Framework of the M/SMEs sector in France

1) The Secretary of State to commercial and service companies and M/SMEs. This agency is related to the Ministry of Finance, Economy & Industry in France. It highlights the growing importance given in France to the M/SMEs. It hosts a monitoring center on the M/SMEs sector.

2) The Secretary of State for Industry, IT & Telecommunications, which includes the industrial M/SMEs. This agency includes the SESSI.

3) The division of Regional Activities & Industrial M/SMEs, related to the Ministry of Finance, who manages the financial aid and incentives supplied to the M/SMEs sector.
The APCE, the Agency for the Creation of Enterprises. CGPME, the General Federation for M/SMEs, which is the equivalent of the Federation of Large Companies in France (MEDEF), in what concerns the M/SMEs. Although the M/SMEs have now a ministerial body to monitor their sector, i.e., a Secretary of State related to the Ministry of Finance, Economy & Industry, there are three other state organizations involved in their monitoring, in addition to the CGPME, the private federation of M/SMEs representing their interests.

2. Case Study of Canada

Main collectors and the various sources of data in the country

Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada is a government organization responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistical information relating to the commercial, industrial, financial, social, economic and general activities and conditions of the people of Canada. Statistics Canada has two main objectives:

1. To provide statistical information and analysis about Canada’s economic and social structure to:
   - Develop and evaluate public policies and programs
   - Improve public and private decision-making for the benefit of all Canadians.
2. To promote sound statistical standards and practices by:
   - Using common concepts and classifications to provide better quality data.
   - Working with the provinces and territories to achieve greater efficiency in data collection and less duplication.
   - Reducing the burden on respondents through greater use of data sharing agreements (sources used include annual tax records, monthly employee payroll records and customs records)
   - Improving statistical methods and systems through joint research studies and projects.

Strategis

Strategies is a subsidiary of Industry Canada (a department in the Federal Canadian Government having the goal of fostering a growing competitive, knowledge-based Canadian economy) aiming at providing business and consumer statistics through its website to the public. Strategis has more than 2 million electronic documents in its database and 3 gigabytes of searchable statistical data, while it links to 20 thousand business links.

GD Sourcing, Research & Retrieval

GD Sourcing is an Internet based research and retrieval private company that specializes in helping researchers access statistics collected by the Canadian Federal government. The company was launched 5 years ago to help meet the need for a single, accurate and accessible reference point to the data holdings of the Canadian Federal Government. The company states that it’s main mission is to accumulate all statistics provided by various governmental agencies in one source.
GD Sourcing carries on its activity through contacting the government departments upon the client's request, handle the access charges and provide him with a complete research.

**Nature and type of data collected**

Statistics *Canada* classifies its statistics according by topics:

- The economy: (latest indicators, the economic conditions, primary industries, census of agriculture, communication transportation and trade, international trade, manufacturing and industry and finance & services)
- The land: (geography and environment)
- The people: (population, education, labor, employment and unemployment, health, families & household and culture, leisure & travel)
- The state (government and justice & crime)

If we take the example of the economy, "latest indicators" topic includes a range of detailed sub-topics with their relevant statistical tables.

On the other hand, Statistics Canada has a serie of publications, papers and statistical services, some of which are free of charge while the others are sold. Example of publications, Canada Food Statistics (available on CD-ROM, updated twice a year, sold for 75$).

CANSIM is another product, an online database resource for Canadian socio-economic statistics on labor, health, income, trade, education, manufacturing, investment and other. CANSIM Tracks trends, analyzes market potential or study economic activity with reliable data from the ultimate authority in Statistics Canada.

Strategis classifies its statistics as follows:

- Company's directory (including importers database, federally incorporated companies database and Canadian Companies Capabilities)
- Trade and investment statistics (including international business opportunities, trade statistics, trade and investment policy, and investment promotion)
- Business information by sector, available in several search criteria
- Economic analysis & statistics (available as raw data as well as publications on various economic aspects)

*The Small Business Research and Policy* is a section in the "Economic Business analysis and statistics" that includes the *SME Research Database*, an extensive collection of research references on the subject of entrepreneurship and small business in Canada, containing over 1,500 items of small business and entrepreneurship research undertaken by university researchers, governments and business organizations. The large majority of references pertain to Canada. However, selected international references are also included. The data included in the database is classified into 5 main groups, each group is divided into subgroups while cross-section classification is also included. These are the main classifications of the database:

- Entrepreneurship Concepts (4 subgroups)
- Entrepreneurs - Characteristics and Relationships (8 subgroups)
- Management Functions (9 subgroups)
Dynamics of Growth and Survival (6 subgroups)
Economic Context (4 subgroups)

SMEs Research Data base also includes Small Business Quarterly, a quarterly produced product of Industry Canada, overviewing key small business statistics, trends and recent developments. This publication is based on interviewing a number of SMEs on specific aspects. (See annex for a copy of this publication).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is another product that present key statistics on small business topics, responding to some of the most commonly asked questions. Among the statistics covered in the report, existing number of businesses in Canada, number of employees in the SMEs sector, etc. The sources of the raw data collected and analyzed in the FAQs are Statistics Canada and Canadian Business Registry. (The latest version of the FAQs is included in the annex).

GD sourcing, on the other hand disseminates tailored statistics based on the client's requirements as well as offering customized list of available statistics and publications. The list includes:

- Canadian household spending data
- Sources of Canadian Market Research Data
- 2001 Census: Population & Dwelling Counts
- Quarterly Retail Commodity Data
- Canadian Community Profiles
- Municipal Government Web Sites (many include local demographics)
- International Trade Data (Imports & Exports)
- Market Research Handbook
- Researching a small business in Canada

Frequency of data collection

Frequency of data collection varies from annual, semi-annual and quarterly according to the type of data.

Cost of data

The majority of data provided by the Federal Canadian government is free of charge, however some of the publications (such as "Canada Food Statistics" is sold for 75 $, due to the in-depth information coverage on one side and due to it's detailed classification structure that permits several search criterias.

On the other hand, GD Sourcing, which is a private entity offers free direction to Canadian statistics which are available on-line free of charge while selling it's products (whether customized or tailored) to it's clients.

One of the main publications produced by the company is the research guide "Researching a Small Business" available online, on CD-ROM and hard copy costing 21, 27 and 39 $ respectively. It includes Market Research guidelines, tips for entrepreneurs, identification of Canada's main Canadian sources for cash flow statement development and the creation of realistic performance expectations, marketing and operational analysis and Internet research strategies.
Technology used and infrastructure of data dissemination

Statistics Canada, Strategis and GD Sourcing created websites to disseminate the available statistics as fast as possible to the larger base of public, whether inside Canada or abroad. Although direct electronic downloads are available, direct shipping orders are still an option for CD-ROM or hardcopies publications.

Main users of statistics

Strategis was the only statistical agency among the identified 7 countries that conducted a survey aiming at identifying the main users of their services, the survey identified the following:

- 90% of the users were Canadian, while 5% were from the United States and 5% were from other countries.
- 43% of the users were full time employees, 23% Business owners, partner or president, 12% students, while 11% were consultants
- the majority of the employment sector were in the field of biotechnology, with a 15% percentage, followed by the IT sector, with a 10% percentage
- Company size was also taken into consideration, as 18% of the users were self employed, 17% were companies of 1 to 4 employees and 18% were companies with 5 to 19 employees. Enterprises with 250 + employees had the biggest share as they reached 20%.

Information available on services offered

Strategis has as well a complete section devoted to providing guiding information on services offered to small businesses. Services are classified according to the following:

- Services related to starting a business; (includes business start up information site, a guide to Federal Incorporation, downloadable various form, information on specialized fair, etc.)
- Financing; (includes identification of the various sources of financing, guiding steps towards capital growth, government’s financing services, etc.)
- Exporting; (includes data on trading, link towards exporting sources, listing of Canadian Trade Centers, identification of trade fairs, information on GATT, etc.)
- Researching Markets; (includes information on International Business Practices, market research reports, country commercial guides, etc.)
- Suppliers, Partners and Customers; (various databases on Canadian and US companies)
- Managing People; ( Links to Human Resources websites)
- Using Electronic Commerce; ( provides info on E commerce as well as links to e-Business websites)
- Exploiting technology opportunities; (provides links to technology centers and research institutes, link to patent database, etc.)
- Business & the environment; (information on problems and solutions for environmental problems, link to the Environmental Affairs Branch, guiding towards efficient production, etc.)

1 This information was only available in Strategis
The information available is free of charge and is not related to a time span since it is mainly a guide towards different services that are offered. The data is either present in Strategis’ Website or it is available on other linked websites.

4.3 Case study of the United Kingdom\textsuperscript{1}

Main collectors and the various sources of data

\textit{UK’s National Statistics Agency}

The National Statistics Agency of the UK is the main government agency responsible for the collection and dissemination of data providing a description of the UK’s economy and society. The National Statistics Agency was created in the year 2000, articulating – as described in it’s mission statement – the government’s commitment to providing a statistical service that is open and responsive to the society’s need.

\textit{Statistics Commission}

Statistics commission is an independent, non-executive body that advises Ministers on the statistical integrity and quality of National Statistics.

\textit{The Small Business Services (SBS)}

The Small Business Services is an agency within the Department of Trade and Industry, providing guidance for small business through offering information services as well as promoting small businesses in disadvantaged communities. SBS has a portal website that will be presented in the "portal" section of this study.

\textit{Ministries and sector-related entities}

Each Ministry is required to provide National Statistics regularly with the latest figures related to it’s sector, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture provides National Statistics with data related to Land Area, production of agri-produces, etc.

\textsuperscript{1}Source: National Statistics UK website
Nature and type of data collected

Data is classified according to activity sector, the following sectors are covered:

- Agriculture, fishing and forestry
- Commerce, industry & energy (cross-sectioned with size of employment, where data concerning M/SMEs can be extracted)
- Economy
- Education and training
- Health and care
- Labor market
- Transportation, travel and tourism

Each of the above sectors is sub-classified into topics, where each of the topics is either covered in the form of dataset, surveys, or links to a more specialized website. For example, the agricultural sector includes the following topic:

- **Overview of agriculture, fishing and forestry, including:**
  - a directory of publications and data with a three level hierarchy: Theme, subject within theme and topic within subject.
  - A link to the official website of DEFRA (Department of Environmental Food & Rural Affairs) with its related statistics

- Output and inputs of agriculture and the food industry, including (food production and supply, animal feed, dairy farming and produce, food, drink, and other 'agri-industries') broken down as follows:
  - **Agriculture in the UK, available in the following formats: (PDF and excel files on DEFRA's website, datasets classified as follows: (accounts, commodities, environment, farming income and agriculture in the economy, prices, productivity, public expenditure on agriculture, structure of the industry and subsidies), each of those classifications include a serie of topics presenting tables on excel or PDF formats.**

A number of surveys and statistics covering areas related to M/SMEs are also compiled and disseminated exclusively by SBS such as:

- Survival rates of new businesses
- Business start ups and closure
- SME Statistics for UK for 2000
- VAT registration and deregistration

Frequency of data collection

As indicated, there are two main types of statistics, database (datasets) and surveys and publications. The datasets for all sectors are collected annually, while the surveys and publications are broken down per topic and do not have a fixed periodicity.

Cost of data

Almost all datasets and publications are available on an electronic format free of charge on the National Statistics or other related links free of charge.
Technology used and infrastructure of data dissemination

National Statistics – through its website – supplies updated statistics that covers all economic and social aspects of the UK. The existence of a free-of-charge database, user friendly and available on several electronic formats and accessible to all the public made any information on the UK obtainable by any one in any place of the world.

Role of statistics in the country's development

The National Statistics UK – in it's mission statement – states it's aim in providing an accurate, up-todate, comprehensive and meaningful picture of the economy and society to support the formulation and monitoring of economic and social policies by government at all levels, in addition to:

- Informing the Parliaments and Assemblies and the citizen about the state of the nation and provide a window on the work and performance of government, allowing the impact of government policies and actions to be assessed
- Providing business with a statistical service which promotes the efficient functioning of commerce and industry
- Provide researchers, analysts and other customers with a statistical service that assists their work and studies
- Promoting these aims within the UK, the European Union and internationally and to provide a statistical service to meet European Union and international requirements.

The objectives of National Statistics in pursuit of these aims are:

- To improve the quality, timeliness and relevance of its service to customers both within government and the wider community;
- To improve public confidence in official statistics by demonstrating that they are produced to best professional standards and free from political interference;
- To operate efficiently by improving value for money in the production of its outputs and minimizing the burden on those who supply it with data.

In order to ensure that National Statistics are relevant, accurate and focused on meeting the needs and aspirations of users, there is transparent planning framework and priority setting process for National Statistics. This includes:

- Producing a coherent, up-to-date, high level program for National Statistics that reflects the needs of users and which brings together the key elements of statistical work programs across Government. The Statistics Commission will consider and comment to Ministers on an annual work program prepared by the National Statistician with the support of statistics Heads of Profession. In doing so, it will draw on the views of users and suppliers and is required to maintain effective consultation arrangements to this end. In determining departmental statistics work programs Ministers will have regard to the views of the Statistics Commission and needs of users, departmental and cross-government priorities, compliance costs of data collection, and international commitments. All parties will play their parts in this process with regard to the available resources for National Statistics.
- Establishing clear quality assurance processes for National Statistics. The National Statistician will establish a quality assurance program including

1Source: National Statistics’ Mission Statement
thorough reviews of key outputs at least every five years with the involvement of external expertise. The Statistics Commission will comment on the quality assurance processes and will advise the National Statistician of any areas of concern that merit review: if necessary it may commission its own audits.

- Developing and maintaining statistical standards, definitions and classifications and promoting high quality statistical output through systematic evaluation and research. The National Statistician will be responsible for these arrangements except in the case of the Retail Prices Index where special arrangements apply: the National Statistician will take the lead in advising on methodological questions concerning the RPI but the scope and definition of the index will continue to be matters for the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- Maintaining a transparent mechanism for taking into account the views of users and providers of data in the priority setting process. The National Statistician will be responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate consultation arrangements: the Statistics Commission will have access to the information so garnered from users and providers and will establish their own supplementary consultation arrangements.

Keeping under review the scope of National Statistics: the initial scope of National Statistics is set out in a document published today. Ministers will take decisions about the coverage of National Statistics in the light of the costs and benefits involved. To help this process, the Statistics Commission will advise Ministers of any widespread concerns about the quality of official statistics.

**Improving Public Confidence in National Statistics**

Not only must National Statistics be produced and presented without political interference but, in addition, this must be clearly apparent to users. This will be achieved by:

- Developing and maintaining a professional Code of Practice including policy for the release of National Statistics and policy on the handling of, and access to, data within government. The National Statistician is responsible for preparing the Code of Practice and, as necessary, resolving any issues concerning interpretation of the Code. Ministers are responsible for ensuring that statistics Heads of Profession have the authority to maintain and demonstrate the integrity of National Statistics in accordance with the Code.

- The National Statistician having a right of access to the Prime Minister, and First Ministers in devolved administrations, on issues of professional integrity including on resources where they impact on the integrity of National Statistics.

- If they wish, in the context of devolution, Parliaments and Assemblies setting up arrangements for enhanced scrutiny of National Statistics. This could cover both aspects of statistical integrity, quality and freedom from political interference.

**Operate Efficiently**

National Statistics need to be produced efficiently in order to maximize the benefits from the available resources. This will be achieved by:

- Setting challenging and explicit efficiency targets, and seeking always to achieve them;
- Taking advantage of technological developments to reduce costs of collection, processing and dissemination;
- making effective use of existing data sources including existing administrative sources;
- Providing guidance in the National Statistics Code of Practice on ways efficiency can be optimized, and reporting on efficiency improvements in the annual report on National Statistics.

Responding to statistical inquiries also imposes a burden that suppliers legitimately expect to be kept to a minimum, consistent with the government’s requirements for reliable statistics. Such compliance costs will be contained by:

- Making use of existing data sources wherever cost effective and practicable;
- Collecting statistics using administrative data where possible and controlling the use of censuses and statistical surveys to minimize the burden on data suppliers;
- Taking advantage of technological developments to reduce costs to suppliers of data collection; and
- Maintaining a compliance plan of the costs of statistical data collection to businesses and local authorities.

The National Statistician will be responsible for estimating the compliance costs to businesses and local authorities of responding to statistical inquiries and minimizing those costs. The Statistics Commission is required to have regard both to efficiency and to the need to keep compliance costs to a minimum when commenting on the annual work program for National Statistics.

Information on services offered to M/SMEs

The most successful M/SMEs service actually in the UK is the "Business Link" network, a partnership among the local provinces and the large companies who jointly funded their establishment. However, the Business Link sell their services to the M/SMEs and have started selling their know how in terms of business centers for SMEs overseas of which for the SFD in Egypt.

Business Link is thus a national service that provides help and advice on all aspects of setting up and running a business in the UK. Operating in 45 local areas across England, Business Link offers its services as well to large companies.

Available information on these services are presented in various forms, whether fact sheets, FAQs or case studies covering the following areas:

- Starting a business and it's related services
- Finance and money and it's related services
- Sales and marketing and it's related services
- E Commerce and IT and it's related services
- Management and operations and it's related services
- Business improvement and it's related services
- Regulation and taxes and it's related services
- Government initiatives and it's related services

The information available and registration to Business Link Website is totally free of charge. As the type of information available is a "guiding steps information", it is hence not relevant to a particular time span.
4. Case study of Italy

Italy is recognized world-wide as the model of successful economic development nurtured by a highly developed M/SMEs sector. as such, the country was selected to be part of the 7 countries case study to develop an Egyptian M/SMEs statistical model. However, the analysis of Italy's M/SMEs statistical monitoring and beyond the overall country statistical output indicates that the successful M/SMEs policies of the country are not generated by the quality of the statistical data and therefor, accurate incentives triggered by the data.

The numerous surveys published on Italy, as well as the data collected indicates that the success of the Italian M/SMEs in their country and worldwide is rather related to the country's business culture and the fact that Italy's M/SMEs had for example invented successful M/SMEs services such as the cluster concept and highly efficient subcontracting programs before it becomes an international recipes for M/SMEs.

However, we are presenting Italy's case study here in because of it's importance with Egypt being one of it's priority export markets and the importance of the trade and cooperation relations between the two countries.

As indicated in the following analysis, the responsibility for producing and disseminating economic statistics, including the one related to the M/SMEs is separate from the role of disseminating information and services to the M/SMEs. As such, the statistics are mainly handled by government agencies with little evolvement from the business community, whereas the information of services for M/SMEs are handled by semi-private institutions representing the M/SMEs themselves.

However, the database of companies both large and M/SMEs continues to be handled by the chambers of commerce and is now processed by their information and IT company as presented here and below.

Main collectors of statistical data

*SISTAN: National Statistical System*

Italy has started much later than other EU member countries, such as France setting up the unification of it's national statistics and the re-organization of the different agencies in charge of statistical output at national and local level. SISTAN was established by decree 1989 as the state body in charge of disseminating Italy’s statistical information, in the country and internationally. The system started with only state agencies as members and it is only in 1998 that an additional decree included private entities, which as members for the private entities who assume activities of public interest. The criteria for electing such private entities to be a member of SISTAN were further detailed in another decree in 2000.

*State Agencies Collecting Data*

A) ISTAT: National Statistical Institute
B) Three other state statistical agencies, ISAE, INEA and ISFOL
C) Statistical offices (3,218) at the level of the state, provinces and in each Chamber of Commerce (102) and each sub-region (2,957), it should be noted that the Chambers of Commerce in Italy cover large and M/SMEs as they are Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Handicrafts.
**COMSTAT**

The Council for the Coordination and Planning of Statistical Information. It is a body similar to the French CNIS, managed by ISTAT, the National Statistical Institute, mainly composed of members of state agencies and university professors. It should be noted that contrary to France, the business community is not represented in this national body illustrating - as indicated above – the recognized pattern in Italy of the business sector developing parallely to the state agencies.

**Commission for the guarantee of statistical information**

This agency is related to the Prime Ministries Cabinet, and is responsible for checking the impartiality and completeness of the statistical information as well as such aspect as methodology and conformity to the international institution to which Italy is related.

As for the above-mentioned COMSTAT Agency, the commission is composed of university professors and directors of statistical research institutes and state agencies.

**Nature and type of data**

The National Statistical Program, which general scope was also defined in the Ministerial Decree of 1989\(^1\) includes the following:

- The contents of the statistics of public interest
- 3 years publications with an annual update
- confirmation of the scope of the data which does not infringe citizens' rights

**Dissemination and costs of data**

The statistical data presents the whole economic sector without particular emphasis on the M/SMEs sector. The dissemination is done to all government agencies, NGOs and companies interested through regular publications, whereas two main entities have developed fairly comprehensive websites, these are:

- [www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it), the Italian Statistical Institute
- [www.sistan.it](http://www.sistan.it), National Statistical System

The cost of such data is not available on the site and there is no possibility to order studies as for example the portal of the French Statistical Institute INSEE, which allows to order studies online. However, access to some information, such as the statistical program is classified.

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\(^1\)The same Ministerial decree had included an obligation for all state agencies, private companies and individuals to respond to statistical inquiries and provide the required information, except specific groups.
M/SMEs information and service agencies

As indicated above, the M/SMEs are supported in Italy by two main institutions, the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Handicraft on one hand, and the confederation of Micro and Small Enterprises on the other. The Chambers of Commerce are member of the National Statistical System, whereas the CAN, the confederation of M/SMEs is not.

Info Camere

It is the information and the IT company of the Italian Chambers of Commerce and the main body having an effective dissemination activity towards the business community. It is as well one of the two main bodies producing surveys on the M/SMEs, as well as maintaining the Italian companies database. In addition, they have a portal which acts as the main web-based solution to provide information, i.e., surveys on the Italian companies and markets "www.infocommerce.it".

Companies' database of Info Commerce

The database of companies managed by Info Commerce covers all companies totaling 5 million with comprehensive coverage of large companies from 1995 and of M/SMEs beginning 2000.

The companies' data is also providing a national register of protested bills, the access to the database can be ordered from their website. In addition, they quarterly publish the analysis of the Italian companies' evolution including such items as creation and disappearance of companies sorted by location, legal form and activity sector.

Moreover, they manage the MUD, the statistical program monitoring companies compliance with the environmental regulations, also produced and available on their website.

It must be noted that Info Commerce supplies on this website for all companies formats for obtaining a Commercial Registry and listing protested bills and payment issues and range of declarations formats needed by the Italian companies in dealing with the government. The database is now offered in full on the web, however against a fee and provides a search up to 5 criteria:

- by product or service
- by national activity code ISTAT
- by location
- by size of capital
- by legal form

Indicative prices are, search cost (minimum obligatory 21 Euro) and the cost per company 0.02 Euro. Orders can be processed online.

CNA, The National Confederation for M/SMEs

This body represents the owners of all micro, small and medium companies, and acts as a lobby defending their interest towards the government. The CNA has been promoting the role of cottage industry and handicraft professions in Italy as
well as in Europe. As such, the CAN, in order to respond the wide-spread presence of such activities has also a very large decentralization with 7,500 persons in 1,000 offices in Italy offering services, consultancy and information to the micro and small companies. The CAN was established in 1946 and counts 350,000 members.

**CNA information activity**

- The CNA system is acting as an information resource center for it's members on the European markets in terms of potential exports and assistance in developing cooperation. The main tool used is the European Information Center Network, of which the CNA is the national member of Italy.

- Using extensively the CNA website to inform on all the events related to the handicraft professions, and micro business owners, such as meetings, exhibitions. Workshops, etc. organized by the CNA offices. Another importer feature on CNA site is the monitoring of government's activities and new regulations related to the M/SMEs.

- Publishing a monthly magazine "Artigianews"

- In addition, the CNA utilizes extensively it's website to inform on all the programs it implements such as programs related to research and innovation, marketing, sub-contracting, immigrants and refugees problem, etc.

**CNA service activities**

The services provided to the M/SMEs members of C N A are multiple. Among the most important ones are:

- Cooperation with the Ministry of Education for vocational training
- Cooperative with the Ministry of Interior to fight racket and extortion
- Launching of a National Public Awareness & Advertising campaign at promoting the image of the M/SMEs owners and the role they play in the economy. The campaign is also publicized on the C N A website.
- Programs for the promotion of young entrepreneurs with specific committees
- Programs for the promotion of women entrepreneurs with specific committees
- Artigian Cassa, the credit house for the handicraft professions. It operates since 50 years and functions as a bank for the financing and development of the handicraft sector. they have recently added as well saving, insurance and credit cards services
- C N A also provides access to all sources of finance available in Italy, Europe and worldwide or on a sectoral basis through agreement with CESTUD, which provides full data on all financial programs available

**CNA international activities**

From 1984, C N A launched an office in Brussels at the EU level and have launched since a serie of European initiatives to promote the handicraft professions and the M/SMEs, such as the UAEPENI EUROMI, which represents 8 million M/SMEs in Europe's industrial sector.

Among the activities launched by the C N A to serve as an export promotion center overseas for it's members. There are offices for the C N A in France, Egypt, Malta, Cuba and the USA.
5. Case study of developing countries (India, Korea and Bulgaria)

While the developed countries presented in this report tend to have a complete coverage of statistics - whether related to company size or activity sector – the developing countries – whether having an active SME sector or not – are still suffering from poor and incomplete data classification.

This section presents the analysis of the nature and type of data related to M/SMEs for developing countries, in order to:

a) Present examples of a less developed statistical culture and/or,
b) Highlight several issues and set them as examples for Egypt to study and take into consideration

1. India and the creation of a Ministry handling all M/SMEs issues

India created a ministry for the M/SMEs called Ministry of Small Scale Industries and Agro & Rural Industries, the ministry is responsible for policy formulation, promotion, development and protection of small scale industries. It also monitors the implementation of these policies and ensures their effective implementation. Effective measures are being taken to augment the share of small-scale industries¹ in the total production, export and employment in the country.

The Ministry of Small Scale Industries & Agro and Rural Industries designs and implements the policies through its field organizations for promotion and growth of small and tiny enterprises, village and coir industries. The Ministry also performs the functions of policy advocacy on behalf the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector with other Ministries/Departments.

The most active department within the Ministry Small Scale Industry, is the Small Industry Development Organization (SIDO).

SIDO was established in 1954 on the basis of the recommendations of the Ford Foundation. Over the years, it has seen its role evolve into an agency for advocacy, hand holding and facilitation for the small industries sector. It has over 60 offices and 19 autonomous bodies under its management. These autonomous bodies include Tool Rooms, Training Institutions and Project-cum-Process Development Centers. SIDO provides a wide spectrum of services to the small industries sector. These include facilities for testing, tooling, training for entrepreneurship development, preparation of project and product profiles, technical and managerial consultancy, assistance for exports, pollution and energy audits etc. SIDO provides economic information services and advises Government in policy formulation for the promotion and development of SSIs. The field offices also work as effective links between the Central and the State Governments.

Format of statistics

SIDO is providing raw statistics concerning the M/SMEs, among the statistics covered:

¹According to the Ministry of SSI, Small-Scale firms are those who have industrial undertaking in which the investment in fixed assets in plant and machinery whether held on ownership terms on lease or on hire purchase does not exceed Rs 10 million, while tiny enterprises are those who have investment limit in plant and machinery in respect of tiny enterprises is Rs 2.5 million irrespective of location of the unit.
- Number of registered and unregistered SSI units
- Growth of Employment in SSI & Industrial Sector
- Trends in Growth SSI & Industrial Sector
- Growth of SSI Export
- Sickness in SSI Sector
- Status Classification of SSIs

Egypt can benefit from the creation of such Ministry to handle all the issues related to M/SMEs separately.

**M/SMEs services provision**

India can be considered as the country which has benefited the most of the international institutions support to develop their M/SMEs sector and can be considered as having practically served as a laboratory, which they have generalized after in other countries.

The UNIDO analysts illustrate a case study of Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan that is known worldwide for its hand printed textile products. The study implemented by the UNIDO identified a main problem, i.e., the lack of linkages among the different cluster actors, absence of common initiatives and of a shared development vision. The development of efficient and effective linkages between producers, buyers, suppliers, service providers, technical and financial support institutions and government agencies was considered to be a priority as well as instrumental to address the other clusters problem:

The block printers of Sanganer were approached through their old association, the Calico Printers Co-operative Society Ltd. This 55 years old cooperative which in the past had been very active had not provided any services to its members for a period of 12 years. Membership has declined from 100 to 26. With UNIDO assistance, a new president was elected in 1997 and a programmatic platform prepared.

The Block printers of Bagru did not have any umbrella association. Historically, attempts to promote such an association had not yielded positive results. It was therefore attempted to create smaller networks of printer at Bagru. A local NGO, the Indian Institute for Rural Development (IIRD) was given the responsibility of coordinating the projects' activity in Bagru.

Before the UNIDO's intervention, there was no association of exporters dealing with hand printed textile products. However, need for such a group was felt to strengthen exporters' backward linkages with the printers and forward linkages with foreign markets. Simple activities like workshops on internet, design, etc. were conducted to start interaction among a few targeted exporters. These exporters after several meetings formed a "Consortium of textile Exporters"

The newly established or revitalized associations and consortia have with UNIDO assistance prioritized their needs and identified a number of joint initiatives.
2. Bulgaria, a new statistics law and the classification of statistics according to the EU’s standards

The National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria (NSI) was created in 1880 supervised by the Ministry of Finance and in 1999 a law for statistics has been drafted. The necessity of adopting a new law - as described NSI Bulgaria - evolves from the fact, that the existing Law on Statistics as of 1991 regulates in practice only the status and activity of the National Statistical Institute. There is not a legal basis related to the interrelations of the Bodies of Statistics with legal and physical entities, as well as detailed rules for carrying out statistical activity. The Law as of 1991 does not meet the National needs and is not in compliance with the EC requirements pointed out in the Council Regulation (EC) No.322/97 of 17 Feb. 1997 on Community Statistics. The recommendations in Agenda 2000 are connected to "additional clarification of some questions related to impartiality, transparency and confidentiality" of statistical data.

Another reason is the legal regulation of the scope and contents of the Unified Register of Organizations and Bodies, Carrying out Economic and Other Activity on the Territory of the Republic of Bulgaria (BULSTAT), other statistical registers in the country, as well as the interrelations between BULSTAT and other registers and information systems.

In the Draft Law there are given legal definitions for statistical concepts, a detailed description of the structure and interrelations of the Bodies of statistics in the country, the ways of statistical data collection, as well as the principles of confidentiality and protection of data provided from NSI and its offices. The regulations of the existing Law on Statistics at present are improved having in mind the practice of application and acquired experience.

The aim of the Draft Law is to execute completely the statistical activity in compliance to the principles of independence, impartiality, reliability, efficiency, adequacy, confidentiality and publicity, as well as regulating the rules for carrying out statistical activity.

The National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria is dividing it's products into 2 main categories; statistics and publications. While the "statistics section" is covering economic data, such as agriculture, industry, foreign trade, and national accounts, the "publications section" covers publications on tourism, foreign trade, population and social statistics, economy and finance and general statistics. All of these statistics are sold for fees ranging from 40 to 65 USD and produced and updated annually.

NSI of Bulgaria has a complete section in it's database devoted to business data, in compliance with the EU requirements, broken down in six sections:

- Statistics on the economic activity of enterprises
- Energy and raw materials
- Distributive trades
- Transport
- Communication
- Tourism

Agency for Small and Medium enterprise

The Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (ASME) represents the interests of the small and medium-sized business in Bulgaria before the executive and legislative power and implements the state policy on the SME sector.

The goals of the agency is:
- Improvement of the business environment through **easing of the licensing, permit and registration procedures** restricting the activities of M/SMEs as well as laying additional financial burdens on them. To this end the Agency co-ordinates an Intergovernmental Workshop within the Council of Ministers on the optimization of the regulative procedures, which will analyze the current state and propose specific measures for their reduction by the end of 2002;

- Having in mind the difficulties, which M/SMEs face in the finding of means to finance their activities ASME has developed a work scheme and statute of a **guarantee fund**, which will support the receiving of credits from the banks and other financial institutions with the aim of promoting production and business development;

- In support of entrepreneurs and in order to enhance their managerial skills, ASME is launching a **training program**, which will encompass more and more participants from private sector M/SMEs;

- Development of **regional co-operation** through the development of beneficial economic relations among the M/SMEs in Southeast Europe and the setting up of a Balkan Forum of small and medium-enterprises. Its objective is to join the activities of the agencies in the region similar to ASME and to assist the achievement of joint activities for the improvement of the economic contacts between the companies and the opportunities for co-operation, the reduction of the non-tariff and other barriers restricting their activities and the development of support mechanisms.

The agency is also providing consultation and information for SME. Among the information found in the agency's website:

- **Reports on M/SMEs in Bulgaria**
- Registered M/SMEs database includes:
  - The name of the enterprise;
  - The type of the enterprise: micro-, small or medium-sized;
  - The BULSTAT identification code;
  - Registered office address;
  - Mail address
  - The court, case number, file, volume and page where the enterprise is registered;
  - Value of fixed assets and annual turnover;
  - Average number of employees;
  - Date of submitting of the application;
  - Date and number of the order of the President of the Agency, on the basis of which the certificate is issued;
  - Date and number of the order of the President of the Agency, on the basis of which the issued certificate is pronounced invalid
3. Case study of Korea

Main collectors and the various sources of data in the country

*Korea’s National Statistics Office*

The Korean National Statistics Office was created in 1948 and has been through a series of restructuring, the last was in 1999 due to the second reshuffle of government organization, the Division of Statistical Development in the Bureau of Statistical Planning was abolished. The Division of Service Industry Statistics was newly established within the Bureau of Economic Statistics and the Division of Trade & Price Statistics was renamed as the Division of Price Statistics. Until now, the organization of NSO has maintained such structural formations of 4 bureaus, 19 divisions, 12 statistical offices and 35 local branch offices.

The Korean statistical system is considered to be decentralized as each ministry or non-government agency has the responsibility to compile various statistics related to its own field. Such ministries and agencies include the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, etc. Each unit is in charge of the compilation of statistics and the production of statistics for its own policy purposes. The statistical department of the Bank of Korea is also one of the major agencies compiling official statistics. Under these circumstances, NSO, which is the central government authority in charge of statistics, plays a key role in the Korean statistical system. It has the responsibility of coordinating the national statistical services as well as compiling fundamental statistics and disseminating integrated statistical information. As an independent central government authority, NSO is under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance and Economy, but as far as technical matters are concerned, it responds directly to the appropriate ministries.

The main functions of NSO are:

- Coordination of Statistical Activities
- Establishment of Statistical Standards and Classifications
- Compilation and Analysis of the Fundamental Official Statistics
- Management and Dissemination of Statistical Data
- Statistical Training
- International Statistical Cooperation

*The Korean Small & Medium Business Association (SMBA)*

The main function of the SMBA is to develop and implement the M/SMEs related policies through it’s 11 regional offices throughout the country for efficient and effective implementation of M/SMEs related policies and for on-the-spot support of regional M/SMEs.

Entrusted with the principal business of management support, the Small and Medium Business Policy Bureau develops and implements SME policy, analyzes industry trends, helps aid restructuring reforms and assists small merchants and industrialists and woman-owned businesses. The Management Assistance Bureau is responsible for supporting finance, credit, human resources, information services, marketing and distribution. The Venture Business Bureau assists the promotion of start-up venture companies and venture capital like angel, venture capital companies including assistance with the selection of industrial sites. Finally, the Technology Promotion Bureau helps the SMEs with the development,
transfer and guidance of technology.

The regional offices are entrusted with the mission of promoting cooperation between local government offices and related local SME organizations and of executing supportive policies for local M/SMEs.

The SMBA acquires statistical information on M/SMEs from the National Statistics Office and from related Ministries and/or government agencies and disseminates it through the public. The difference between data disseminated by NSO an SMBA is that SMBA produces general statistics, where M/SMEs are indirectly included while SMBA disseminated directly all statistics related to M/SMEs.

**Nature, type and frequency of data collected**

Data available in NSO is broken down as follows:

*Surveys: (totaling 47 survey)*

*Census surveys: (totaling 17 survey)*

- Agriculture census (Decennial)
- Fishery census (Decennial)
- Population Census (Quinquennial)
- Housing Census (Quinquennial)
- Industrial Census (Quinquennial)
- Census on Wholesale and Retail Trade, Service Industry (Quinquennial)
- Statistical Activity Survey (Biennial)
- Mining and Manufacturing survey (Annual)
- Construction Work survey (Annual)
- Census on Basic characteristics of establishments(Annual)
- Information and Telecommunication survey(Annual)
- Agriculture and Fishery Establishment survey (Annual)
- Environment Industry survey (Annual)
- Electronic Commerce Industry statistics (Quarterly)
- Electronic Commerce Industry statistics (Monthly)

*Sample surveys: (totaling 30 survey)*

- National Wealth survey (Decennial)
- National survey of household income and expenditure (Quinquennial)
- Statistical Response Survey (triennial)
- Service Industry survey (Annual)
- Venture Industry statistics survey (Annual)
- Etc.

*Processed statistics*

- Composite indexes of Business Indicators (Monthly)
- Gross Regional Domestic Products (Annual)
- Etc.

*Data available in the SMBA:*
Annual Statistical Tables
- Financial data
- Venture capital and SMEs
- Employment and SME
- Number of Business Incubators
- Debt to equity ratio
- Business Index Analysis
- Etc.

**Technology used and infrastructure of data dissemination**

The NSO's website presents a detailed description of the data and statistics the agency covers in Korean and English languages, although some of the statistical information are downloadable directly from the website, the surveys implemented cannot be obtained from the net. Cost and method of payment are also undisclosed.

On the other hand, the SMBA disseminates its data free of charge in the form of "html" tables.

**Services offered to M/SMEs**

Among the information that SMBA covers is the services offered to M/SMEs, as it provides a whole section that covers the various assistance given to M/SMEs in Korea and it's source. The information is classified as follows:

- Construction of a start-up and fostering base for SMEs and venture enterprises
- Enhancement of a technology innovation system for M/SMEs
- Creation of an environment conducive to viable enterprise management
- Improvement of the information system for M/SMEs
- Expansion of domestic and overseas markets for M/SMEs products
- Fostering of the middle class & expansion of the industrial base
- Establishment of an efficient support system for SMEs
- Tax incentives towards M/SMEs and its related agencies

Each of the previous topics is then sub-classified into more detailed topics. The information is available on SMBA's website free of charge on html text format.
V. Countries' Web Portal for M/SMEs and / or statistical data

Name of portal / portal address: www.cnis.fr

Background

This French site is operated by the National Council for Statistical Information (presented in details in France Case Study). The National Council for Statistical Information provides a forum for producers and users of public statistics. As coordinator of government statistical activities, it prepares a medium-term program and -within that framework- an annual program incorporating all public surveys.

Government statistical departments submit their projects (surveys, registers, panels and compilations from government records) to CNIS members. The latter examine what each project seeks to achieve, how it will fit into the French statistical information system, and whether or not it deserves priority. All the stages from survey preparation to the dissemination of findings are reviewed. The ultimate aim is to reach a consensus among statistical information producers and CNIS partners, who mainly represent business and labor organizations.

CNIS approval therefore guarantees that an accepted project meets a genuine information requirement in the public interest, that is not redundant, and that it contributes to the medium-term goals defined for the field under study.

CNIS issues an abundant literature on a wide range of topics. It is thus the main source of information on statistical work in France.

Contents of the portal

Information presented in this portal are broken down in 5 main categories:

a) News Section, presenting the most important news related to statistics in general
b) Presentation of the CNIS in terms of mission, services provided, organization chart, the legal framework, background history and list of contacts.
c) The documentation category lists the various publications and surveys
d) The "surveys" category includes lists of surveys broken down by themes or activity.
e) Diary is a listing of the most important upcoming events such as seminar, exhibitions, workshops, etc.
f) Links to other national and international organizations that provide statistical services

Site's Mechanism

The portal – as previously mentioned contains 6 main categories supported by a search engine, a site map and an abbreviation glossary. The sight is presented in French and English and access is completely free of charge and dedicated to researchers who seek obtaining information on the French market.

M/SMEs coverage

As for the statistical data of the country, the M/SMEs data is an integral part of the portal.
2. France

Name of the portal / portal address: www.insee.fr

Background

This website is the National French Statistical Institute's information portal designed to provide a wide range of statistical information covering France.

Contents of the portal

The portal offers the following statistical services, broken down in three categories:

1. Main Indicators

   Consumer Price Index
   Purchasing power of the franc
   Cost-of-construction index
   Minimum wage
   Economic indicators
   Economic analysis
   Quarterly national accounts
   Annual national accounts
   Economic and Financial Data

2. France in fact & figures

   In Brief
   Geography
   Population
   Labor - Employment
   Income - Wages
   Living standards - Society
   Health
   Education
   Economy
   International
   Enterprises
   Agriculture - Food Industries
   Industries - Construction
   Wholesale and retail trade
   Services

3. Publication & Services

   Shop Window
   Catalogue/Order online
   Serial publications
   Working papers

   In addition, the following database classifications are included:

   - The Census, a database broken down by themes, geographical area and type of online product.
Profiles of French regions, contains information and statistics on the French provinces
- SIRENE database of companies
- ALISSE database
- Producer price index

Site mechanism

The main page contains four tool bars as described earlier:

1) Database toolbar
2) Main Indicators toolbar
3) France in Fact & Figures toolbar
4) Publications & Services toolbar

Each of these categories is then classified into detailed topics and sub-topics downloadable on PDF or html formats free of charge. The site is supported with a search engine and a site map to facilitate the extraction of information. The site is presented in French and English.

M/SMEs coverage

As for the statistical data of the country, the M/SMEs data is an integral part of the portal. The portal is very rich in comparison to CNIS. It is used by all categories of the state and business community including the M/SMEs.

3. Canada

Name of the Portal / address: www.strategis.qs.ca

Background:

Strategis is produced by Industry Canada a department of the Federal government which employs over 4,000 people across Canada.

The department's mission – as stated in it's website- is to work with Canadians to build a growing competitive, knowledge-based economy aiming to improve conditions for investment, enhance Canada's innovation performance, increase Canada's share of global trade, and build a fair, efficient and competitive marketplace.

Strategis was launched on March 27, 1996 in order to harness the power of the Internet to provide business and consumer information to all Canadians without the constraints of time and geography allowing Industry Canada to shift from a paper-based information culture to a more efficient electronic one. Before the launch of Strategis, the department produced over 5,000 information products on paper.

Contents of the site:

The portal offers a wide range of information services that are classified as follows:

- Directories of companies
- Trade Investment
Business information by sector
- Economic Analysis Statistics
- Research Technology innovation
- Business Support Financing
- Licenses Legislation
- Employment Learning
- Consumer Information

Directories of companies include
- Company directories
- Importer database
- Link to business directory websites

Trade Investment includes
- International business opportunities
- Statistics on trade
- Trade and investment policies
- Investment promotion events and tips
- Links to investment related sites

Business information by sector includes various classifications for industry sector:
- Alphabetical classification
- Classification by industrial category
- Sectoral events
- Sectors of Trade Team Canada
- Technology Roadmaps, (a planning process driven by the projected needs of tomorrow's markets. It helps companies to identify, select, and develop technology alternatives to satisfy future service, product or operational needs).
- Sector Competitiveness Frameworks document series
- Guides to Canadian Industry, serie of guides classified according to Canada's Industrial Classification System (SIC)

Economic Analysis Statistics include
- Current Economic Condition statistics, classifications include, Micro and Macroeconomics, regional economic indicators, trade and investment statistics.
- Industry Canada Economic Research, classified per type of product
- Industry and Trade statistics
- Small Business Research and Policy database
- Productivity Research & Policy Analysis

Research Technology innovation includes
- Categorized classifications of research and databases
- Information products and tools
- Links to other specialized websites
Business Support Financing includes

- Listing of business support services
- Information on financing
- Tools and tips towards a better financing, business planning, increasing competition, etc.
- Links to other specialized sites

Licenses legislation include

- Services and regulations
- Business policies
- Links to specialized websites

Employment, Learning includes links to recruitment, employment and training websites

Consumer Information includes various information on consumers in Canada, billing, voluntary codes, etc.

Site Mechanism

Due to the huge amount of data operated by this portal, data are classified by several methods with respect to cross-references. There are 3 main tool bars representing data categories with cross-reference between them. The main tool bar was presented above, while the two others contain the same sub-contents but are designed for a direct access to a sub-classification instead of going through a serie of categories.

The "Strategies Guides" tool bar is designed for the direct access of all information related to services offered to M/SMEs. The toolbar lists those services as follows:

- Starting a Business; (includes business start up information site, a guide to Federal Incorporation, downloadable various form, information on specialized fair, etc.)
- Financing; (includes identification of the various sources of financing, guiding steps towards capital growth, government's financing services, etc.)
- Exporting; (includes data on trading, link towards exporting sources, listing of Canadian Trade Centers, identification of trade fairs, information on GATT, etc.)
- Researching Markets; (includes information on International Business Practices, market research reports, country commercial guides, etc.)
- Suppliers, Partners and Customers; (various databases on Canadian and US companies)
- Managing People; (Links to Human Resources websites)
- Using Electronic Commerce; (provides info on E commerce as well as links to e-Business websites)
- Exploiting technology opportunities; (provides links to technology centers and research institutes, link to patent database, etc.)
- Business & the environment; (information on problems and solutions for environmental problems, link to the Environmental Affairs Branch, guiding towards efficient production, etc.)

As we previously said, all the categories listed in this toolbar are also indirectly reachable through the main toolbar.

The second toolbar directly lists services offered by Industry Canada, which categories' are also indirectly included in the main toolbar.

The site is supported by a search engine to facilitate navigation, an alphabetical thesaurus and a site map. The site is presented in English and French languages and the majority of the data are within the portal's database. In case further details are required, there are links to many national and international websites to help obtaining further information.

4. United Kingdom

Name of the portal / portal address: www.sbs.gov.uk

The background

The website is managed by the Small Business Service (SBS), an agency within the Department of Trade and Industry that provides guidance for small businesses providing a wide range of information on and for SMEs.

Contents of the portal

The site contains information on various aspects concerning the SMEs, broken down as follows:

1. Information on Small Business Service Agency
2. Performance monitor for services offered by SBS
3. Listing of services to SMEs offered by SBS, such as improving b-2-b transaction programs, the Ethnic Minority Business Forum, Farm Business Advice Service Program, etc.
4. Listing of local outlets of SBS
5. Links to official UK sites offering information on different regulations affecting the SMEs
6. Listing of downloadable PDF papers addressing issues of interest to SMEs, such as "Starting up a new business", "Early growth funding: information and bidding guidance", "Integrating the business support infrastructure"
7. Introducing SBS research activity along with examples on various surveys and publications implemented by SBS research team. The research team is to generate, gather, co-ordinate and disseminate quality research relevant to small firms in the UK.
8. Press notice is a section dedicated to the latest news concerning the SMEs
9. Speeches of SBS key responsible on various issues for SMEs
10. "Partners" section, including a listing of agencies and governmental bodies that might be of interest to the site visitors
11. "Finance" section lists links to sources that provide loans or information on loans for SMEs
Site Mechanism

The website is very basic and has only one level of classifications (as presented above). The site is fully free of charge and is linked to other websites that provide detailed information on various topics concerning the SMEs.

5. Korea

Name of the portal / site address: www.smba.go.kr

Background:

The portal is owned and operated by the Small and Medium Business Administration (SMBA) of South Korea. The SMBA headquarter is organized with 1 officer, 4 bureaus with 21 divisions to develop and implement the SME-related policies. Also, SMBA has 11 regional offices throughout the country which are established for efficient and effective implementation of SME-related policies and for on-the-spot support of regional SMEs.

Entrusted with the principal business of management support, the Small and Medium Business Policy Bureau develops and implements SME policy, analyzes industry trends, helps aid restructuring reforms and assists small merchants and industrialists and woman-owned businesses. The Management Assistance Bureau is responsible for supporting finance, credit, human resources, information services, marketing and distribution. The Venture Business Bureau assists the promotion of start-up venture companies and venture capital like angel, venture capital companies including assistance with the selection of industrial sites. Finally, the Technology Promotion Bureau helps the SMEs with the development, transfer and guidance of technology.

The regional offices are entrusted with the mission of promoting cooperation between local government offices and related local SME organizations and of executing supportive policies for local SMEs.

Contents of the portal

The portal covers the information related to SMEs, whether statistics or information on relevant laws and regulations as well as the different organizations related to SMEs. The site is broken down as follows:

The Korean SMEs

- The Korean SMEs (This section classifies and defines SMEs according to the Korean standards)
- General policy direction, a section overviewing the policies related to SMEs that are being implemented in Korea and their role in providing a better environment for SMEs. As described by the site, SMBA targets its policies at improving the structure and international competitiveness of SMEs and reducing competition-restrictive systems, so as to keep ahead of the changes and challenges in the new era in which they are expected to play a leading role. Therefore, the government helps SMEs develop their own capabilities to win fierce competition on the basis of flexibility and creativity unique to them. Also, the government is actively working on easing restrictions on enterprise activities, abolishing competition-restrictive measures aimed at protecting SMEs, promoting management suited to a global standard.
Major assistance measures, is another section that discusses in-depth the various assistance programs that are offered by SMBA to SMEs, these programs are:

- Construction of a start-up and fostering base for SMEs and venture enterprises
- Enhancement of technology innovation system for SMEs
- Creation of an environment conductive to viable enterprise management
- Improvement of the information system for SMEs
- Expansion of domestic and overseas markets for SMEs products
- Fostering of the Middle Class & expansion of the industrial base
- Establishment of an efficient support system for SMEs
- Tax incentives towards SMEs and SME-related agencies

Statistics; this section presents statistical information related to SMEs, such as number of startups and bankruptcies, average operating rate, distribution of SMEs and employment by industries, number of businesses owned by women, etc.

Laws related to SMEs

- Overview of laws and regulations, is a list of laws or articles related to SMEs.
- Structure of laws related to SMEs; presents the framework act on SMEs, the main components are:
  - Promotion of SMEs and encouragement of purchase of their products act
  - SMEs cooperative act
  - Act on the protection of business sphere of SMEs and promotion of their cooperation
  - Supports for SMEs establishment act
  - Act on the balance region development and promotion of regional SMEs
  - Korea credit guarantee fund act

SMBA News

Presenting the most important news related to the Small and Medium Business Association.

Other links

Clickable URLs for other websites that might be useful to the site users, these URLs are linking the portal to the following areas:

- Websites providing information on business in Korea
- Listing of websites of Korean organizations related to SMEs
- Listing of websites of foreign organizations that are related to SMEs
- Listing of websites of other Korean governmental organizations
- Listing of websites of local governments

Site mechanism

The site is very basic and has only one level of classification. There are 7 sections in the website, four of which are directly related to SMEs as we presented in the section above, while the remaining three present:
- General news of the site operator (SMBA)
- A bulletin board
- Links to other websites that might be interested to the users

Each of the 4 section related to SMEs are then sub-classified according to topics.
The information contained in this site is completely free of charge, and does not require registration. The site is available in both the Korean and English language.

6. India

Name of the portal: www.smallindustryindia.com

The background

This portal is an outcome a project implemented by Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), the nodal developmental agency for small scale industries under Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Government of India.

SIDO was established in 1954 on the basis of the recommendations of the Ford Foundation. Over the years, it has seen its role evolve into an agency for advocacy, hand holding and facilitation for the small industries sector. It has over 60 offices and 19 autonomous bodies under its management. These autonomous bodies include Tool Rooms, Training Institutions and Project-cum-Process Development Centres. SIDO provides a wide spectrum of services to the small industries sector. These include facilities for testing, tooling, training for entrepreneurship development, preparation of project and product profiles, technical and managerial consultancy, assistance for exports, pollution and energy audits etc. SIDO provides economic information services and advises Government in policy formulation for the promotion and development of SSIs. The field offices also work as effective links between the Central and the State Governments. Consequent to the increased globalization of the Indian economy, small industries are required to face new challenges. SIDO has recognised the changed environment and is currently focusing on providing support in the fields of credit, marketing, technology and infrastructure to SSIs. Global trends and national developments have accentuated SIDO’s role as a catalyst of growth of small enterprises in the country.

Contents of the portal

The SIDO portal offers a wide range of information, covering statistics on SMEs as well as information on services that are offered to SMEs and the methods to access these services. The following section describes the contents of the portal:

General Information services, including:

- Information on the upcoming events (national / international fairs and exhibitions, training courses, conferences, seminars and workshops).
- A Directory providing the contact information of various agencies falling under the umbrella of SIDO.
- Listing of the SIDO network broken down by the geographical area.
- An Information Desk providing access to information to the publication on services & activities of the DCSSI & related institutions in the area of Small-Scale Industry promotion & development. Information covered in this
section are: info on credit services, technologies, lists of reserved items, emerging trends, explanation of Schemes offered for Market Development Assistance for exporters and finally, SSI exclusive purchase items.

- The **SME Showcase** is the Yellow Pages presenting the addresses of SMEs and Machinery Manufacturers. With over 50 categories and 30 lakh records, offering 3 search criteria (by business name, by product and by category), the showcase also features trade resources, SSI cluster studies, projects profile, and downloadable newsletter.

**SMEs Statistics, including:**

- Overview of SSI in India, it's definition, performance statistics covering their production, employment and export rate as well as opportunities and their economic indicator. In addition a list of reserved items and an association list is included

- Information on the **Policies** of the SSI sector, including industrial, central, state and labor policies.

- Information on SIDO **Schemes** and programs

- Tips for the creation of a new SME unit

- Overview of the SSI **Clusters**

- Listing of **publications** produced by SIDO

- **Thrust areas**, describing the available technology, marketing and credit support, as well as listing of training programs for entrepreneurship development, overviewing the self-employment promotional program and finally describing the scheme of infrastructure.

**The site mechanism**

The website portal is designed to offer to SMEs all the information they need in the easiest possible way.

There are 16 main classifications (topics) for the information presented as indicated above, each of these topics is subdivided into sub topics. All information presented in the portal is within it's database, i.e., there are no linkage between this site and other sites. Some of the site's contents are restricted to subscribers, such as projects profiles and some of the publications.

**7. USA**

**Portal name or address:** [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

**Background**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created by Congress in 1953 to help America's entrepreneurs form successful small enterprises, offering financing, training and advocacy programs to M/SMEs. These programs are delivered by SBA offices in all of the USA in addition to working with thousands of lending, educational and training institutions nationwide.
Contents of the Portal

Services offered by the portal are divided in 12 categories listed as follows:

- "Starting your business": includes information needed to start a new business, such as the definition of a small and medium enterprise, guiding tips on legal aspects, market research and surveys on small businesses as well as economic and labour related statistics, etc.
- "Financing your business": includes information on all aspects related to finance, such as loan programs, statistics and forms, lender programs, e-tax, abstracts of workshops on financing, downloadable shareware financing softwares, etc.
- "Business Opportunities": includes links to several networks and databases of companies, links to trade missions and export assistance programs, workshops abstracts, etc.
- "Offices & services": includes a listing of SBA offices in the various states as well as the list of services offered.
  - Link to freedom of Information and Privacy Acts office
  - Link to the "Disaster Assistance" Programs: offer financial assistance to those who are trying to rebuild their homes and businesses in the aftermath of a disaster. By offering low-interest loans
- "National Ombudsman Office"
- "SBA Classroom": an on-line resource for training and informing entrepreneurs and other students of enterprise, designed to educate and provide interactive business guidance on a variety of topics to many types of students. Besides "traditional" small business clients, the on-line classroom will benefit high school and college students, individuals with time and travel limitations, people with disabilities, international business resources and others.
- "Business Cards" is a free service that offers the registration of portal user with their contact information
- "Your Government" presents information on the Government of USA with it's related bodies
- "Outside Resources" offers links to general information and websites (not SMEs specific) that might be of interest to the portal users
- "Online Library" is an online source for papers, surveys and various forms of publications related to M/SMEs policies, statistics and legal framework.

The mechanism of the portal

The services provided by the portal are presented in two toolbars, the first presenting the Headline news of the SBA, "What's new" presenting all of 2002 SBA events, a calendar of the most important upcoming events, "site of the week" promoting on of SBA's related sites, and finally an Answer Desk gives the contacts of SBA to send visitors questions as well as a listing of the top FAQs.

The second tools bar, as described in the above section, presents the various services offered by the portal, each item included in the toolbar is presented in a separate webpage with it's own sub menubar.

The site is free of charge except for database access.
8. **Multilateral portals**

**Name of portal:** EUROSTAT  
**Site Address:** www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/

**Background**

This web portal is a complete toolbox to access the European Union's statistical information. The site is owned and managed by the European Commission.

**Contents of the portal:**

The portal contains information services in various forms as well as other services, the main information available are:

**News Releases**

Eurostat publishes around 140 news releases every year in connection with the release of new data. The news releases are issued at 12 noon CET on the web. They include key figures on EU15 and Euro-zone, the Member States and their partners. They are provided free of charge.

**Statistics in Focus**

This collection is published regularly by Eurostat and provides up-to-date summaries of the main results of statistical surveys, studies and analyses. It covers all themes and consists of about four to eight pages per issue. Eurostat issues around 150 Statistics in Focus per year. Available on-line on subscription.

**Key Indicators**

This collection provides the main indicators on EU15 and Euro-zone, the Member States and their partners.

**Panorama of the European Union**

This collection highlights the features and trends of a multisectoral theme or a sectoral sub-theme. The publications consist of around 200 pages and include analyses as well as tables and graphs. Available as single copies or on subscription.

**Methods and Nomenclatures**

Methods and nomenclatures are intended for specialists who want to consult the methodologies and nomenclatures used for a theme. Available as single copies. Access the Eurostat’s classifications server.

**Detailed Tables**

Detailed tables are intended for specialists. They present part, or all, of the statistical data compiled on a theme, sub-theme or sector. Available as single copies or on subscription.

**Research in official statistics**

Main projects and results: VIROS, SUPCOM...Available as single copies or on subscription.
Catalogues

Catalogues provide rapid access to concise information on Eurostat’s products and services. They are free of charge and include the Mini Guide, a selection of Eurostat products and services, and Statistical References, the quarterly newsletter on Eurostat's latest products and services.

Database Information

The latest, detailed and comparable statistical data at EU level published by Eurostat are stored in the following databases. Personalised data extractions are available from the Data Shop Network. Before submitting your request through the "Ask for statistics" part, we invite you to search for the indicators and variables.

Eurostat News

Eurostat News gives information about the most important events of the European Statistical System, the latest developments of projects and Eurostat calls for tenders.

As for the other services included in the website, they are broken down as follows:

- "Alert me", an e-mail notification on the latest News Releases, Statistics in Focus and all publications
- "Customized notification", an e-mail alert system based on the search criteria the users chose upon their use of the search engine available on the website.
- "Ask for statistics" is an access to the various services proposed by Eurostat Data Shop network
- "links and contact" gives a listing of contacts concerning the European and international Statistical System.
- "Media center" for journalists
- "Online ordering" services

Site mechanism

As we previously mentioned, the main service offered in this site is "information", while information is classified into 9 topics, or "Themes", other services are divided into 6 categories.

Information Themes

1. General statistics
2. Economy & Finance
3. Population 7 Social Conditions
4. Industry, Trade & Services
5. Agriculture & Fishery
6. External Trade
7. Transport
8. Environment & Energy
9. Science & Technology

Each of the above-mentioned themes is then classified forms. While "News Releases", "Statistics in Focus", Key Indicators", "catalogues", "database information" and "Eurostat News" forms are downloadable free of charge,
"Panorama of European Union", Methods of Nomenclature", Detailed Tables" and "Research on official statistics" forms are sold for fees.

The following section will list examples the type and the form of information available for each of the 9 themes:

**General Statistics**

- Regional Statistical Yearbook 2001
- Eurostat Yearbook 2002
- **Statistics in focus** "the Moroccan economy and it's links with EU-15", "Regional domestic gross product in candidate countries"
- **Panorama of the European Union** " Eurostat yearbook 2002 – Economy and finance", " Eurostat yearbook 2002 – Enterprises and their activities"
- **Methods and Nomenclatures** " European regional statistics - Changes in the NUTS classification 1981-1999", " European regional statistics - Reference guide"
- **Detailed Tables** "Eurostatistics - Data for short-term economic analysis ", "Eurostatistics - Data for short-term economic analysis"
- Etc.

**Name of the portal / portal address:** [www.gin.sme.ne.jp](http://www.gin.sme.ne.jp)

Global Information Network for Small & Medium Enterprises

**Background**

On February 25 and 26, 1995, the G7 Ministerial Conference on the Information Society was held in Brussels and was attended by the Ministers of the G7 countries and Members of the European Commission. They agreed to execute 11 joint projects. These projects aim at demonstrating the potential of the Information Society and stimulating its development. The goal of the "Global Information Network for SMEs", a part of the "Global Marketplace for SMEs" which is one of those 11 projects, is to contribute to developing an environment where SMEs can exchange information on products, technologies, human resources, etc. freely, overcoming obstacles of distance and borders.

**Contents**

The portal lists 16 clickable URLs for 16 countries. These countries are: the G7 countries, i.e., (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and US) in addition to other countries: (Australia, Brunei, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Swiss, thailand, Hong Kong and the European Union).

Each country is represented by a website presenting information on SMEs this country.
Site mechanism

The site mechanism is very simple, where the main page represents the member countries clickable flags that links directly towards the SME website for this country. In addition, there are 4 other M/SMEs-related portals referred to in the GIN, namely:

www.actetsme.org
www.isbd.org.jp
www.iccwbo.org
www.unece.org

Name of the portal / portal address: (World Association for Small & Medium Enterprises) www.wasmeinfo.org

Background

The World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME), founded in 1980 at New Delhi, India has emerged within 20 years as the largest professionally managed global non-governmental organization with Members and Associates in 112 countries serving micro, small and medium enterprises.

WASME role is to identify constraint facing M/SMEs globally and find solutions for these constraints. Since WASME is the only international non-governmental organization of SMEs enjoying Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, it is entitled to send its representatives to attend all concerned meetings of these organisations as well as those of Regional Commissions and various Expert Group Meetings / Symposia, etc. convened by these agencies, enabling the experts of WASME member institutions to have access to valuable documentation and to express considered views on behalf of WASME on related issues and to interact with top specialists of the world in their areas of specialisation.

WASME maintains close working relationship with the International Labour Office, Geneva; International Trade Centre, Geneva; Asian Productivity Organisation, Tokyo; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, European Union, Brussels, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) etc. Permanent Representatives of WASME are in constant touch with UN Agencies and other International Organisations dealing with SMEs. WASME also has a number of Senior Advisers in member countries.

The contents of the portal

Services offered by the portal are classified into 3 main categories, Technology & Trade Center, Information Service, and listing of upcoming events.

Technology & Trade Center

One of the major activities of World Association for Small & Medium Enterprises (WASME) is to promote enterprise co-operation amongst small and medium-sized businesses. This exercise is done through computerized match-making process so as to promote joint-ventures, business co-operation, technology transfers and
enhancing market access. WASME receives a large number of requests from its members and their associate/assisted enterprises looking for business partners. While some are offering technologies, equipment’s, services and markets for M/SMEs coming from other countries, there are also large number of requests for seeking technologies, equipment’s, services and market outlets. These services are classified as follows:

- Technology Exchange Program
- Trade opportunities/Trade statistics
- Business profiles
- Partner matching Offers and Opportunities
- Internet Advertising
- Reference Library

**Information Services**

Includes a list of selected publications that are sold through a Direct Order Form, among the publications that are listed:

- WASME Newsmagazine (bi-monthly)

This magazine includes News, Features and Messages to SMEs around the Globe, features include Article of the month, Global Economic Watch, Business Opportunities, World SME News, Focus on Publications and Upcoming Events.

- Technologies for Food Processing Industries: Around the Globe. 1993
- WASME Small Enterprises Series:

**Series 1:** Deals with Private Sector for Small Enterprises some Conclusions.
**Series 2:** Gives new perceptions of SME promotion policy, which the author believes would help in stimulating sustained and dynamic growth of SMEs.
**Series 3:** Deals with three articles - first on Institutional representation; second on Classifying SMEs, and the third on Credit guarantee. All these topics are of great interest to policy makers.
**Series 4:** Deals with financing of SMEs - venture capital for Small Enterprises in developing countries. It is almost like a textbook for financial institutions, schools of economics, industry and trade associations’ etc.
**Series 5:** Evaluation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises as International Suppliers. Thorsten Winkelmann reviews structural characteristics of the supply industry which is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, internationalisation objectives and strategies and different internationalisation forms and stability analysis.
**Series 6:** Criteria for Selecting Natural Resources in Conservation-Cum-Development Projects.
This study of tropical rainforest areas by Jorg Hartmann discusses the problem of conservation of endangered eco-systems with particular reference to rural areas of developing countries and identifies pre-conditions for the successful development of small-scale enterprises engaged in such industries.
**Series 7:** Internationalisation Strategies of Small and Medium-Sized Suppliers in a Globalizing Economy.
Thorsten Winkelmann has analysed internationalisation strategies used by small and medium-sized suppliers in certain industry segments in Germany.
**Series 8:** Informal Sector Enterprises in the Light of New Institutional Economics.
This paper by Dietrich Muller-Falcke examines the behaviour of informal entrepeneurs and the constraints to the growth of informal enterprises with the help of arguments developed by New Institutional Economics.

**Upcoming Events**

Lists the upcoming conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. that deal with issues that are of interest to M/SMEs.

**Site mechanism**

The site mechanism is very basic, the main toolbar contains six section, of which 3 are related to services offered by the portal or the WASME (presented here above), while the other 3 sections are general (About us, describes roles and function of WASME, contact Us, contains contact information and finally Membership, containing the benefits and types of being a WASME member)

The website is in English, and is supported by a search engine to facilitate navigation through the site's contents.

**Name of Portal / portal address:** [www.enterweb.org](http://www.enterweb.org)

**The background of the portal**

The Enterprise Development Website is a private venture consisting of an annotated meta-index and information clearinghouse on enterprise development, business, finance, international trade and the economy. The main focus is on micro, small and medium scale enterprises, cooperatives, community economic development, both in developed and developing countries. EnterWeb lists and rates Internet resources in these areas, and complements search engines by providing shortcuts in identifying important sources of information. EnterWeb acts as a single dispatching window of information which will direct anyone looking for information related to enterprise development, business and international trade to a place on the web that responds to their needs.

The primary objective of ENTERWeb is to act as an information broker which will provide to enterprise development practitioners, policy makers, academics and small business owners an annotated list of Internet resources giving substantive information on enterprise development topics including finance and credit, technology and technology transfer, management training, business centers and advisory services, entrepreneurship development and incubators, community economic development, credit unions and cooperatives, education and vocational training, marketing and trade, business networks and information resources, business law and cyberbusiness, enterprise development policies, economics, enterprise and environment, business news, women and enterprises, etc.

The objective is for each individual topic to identify what are the best sites on the web with regards to that particular topic and to give enough general information on each site so that one would know whether or not they should visit it.

In addition, ENTERWeb aims to provide business related information and links on a country by country basis, mostly for developing countries and emerging markets.
Contents of the portal

Information provided in the portal are divided into 26 main topics:

1. Entrepreneurship; series of URLs for websites providing information for entrepreneurs on how to start a new business as well as issues that are of interest to entrepreneurs
2. Finance; listing of URLs providing information on financing for small businesses and loans
3. Management; listing of websites providing management development services and discusses issues related to management
4. Markets; listing of websites providing information on international trade and export promotion
5. Advisory Services; listing of websites providing business consultancy services
6. Technology; listing of websites providing information on technology transfer
7. Business Law; listing of websites providing business, trading and IP laws
8. Policy; listing of websites providing information on various policies affecting the SMEs
9. Incubators; listing of websites providing information on business creation, incubators and self-employment initiatives
10. Cooperatives; listing of websites providing information on cooperatives
11. Donors; listing of websites providing information on donors activities, programs and projects
12. Bibliography; Link to relevant documents, reports and publications
13. Y2K Bug; listing of sites discussing the Y2K issues and it's impact on SMEs
14. Cyberbusiness; listing of websites providing information on how to run a website
15. Education & Training; listing of websites providing information on the best resources on business education and business administration
16. Economics; listing of websites providing information on the economic issues
17. Women; listing of websites providing information for female entrepreneurs
18. Networks; listing of Business networks and information centers.
19. Community development; links to local development and social economy
20. Microfinance; listing of websites providing information on Microfinance
21. Environment; listing of websites providing information on the relationship between the environment and businesses
22. Business research; listing of websites providing information on international business and enterprise development research
23. Discussion groups; listing of websites providing interaction and discussions services for issues related to SMEs
24. Conferences; listing of websites providing information on international conferences and seminars related to enterprise development
25. Business News; listing of websites having the most relevant and current business news
26. Knowledge Economy; listing of websites offering information on knowledge-based information society
The site mechanism

The site is designed in a user-friendly structure, and acting as a gateway to websites that offer integrated information on SMEs issues. The site is free of charge and is supported by a search engine to facilitate the extraction of information. The site is bilingual (English & French).

Name of the portal / portal address: www.isbc.com

Background

International Small Business Consortium's (ISBC) is also a private venture in form of an American portal with a mission – as described by it's operators - to provide a productive and professional Internet / web-based network to help SMEs communicate about business needs, expand their markets, share their resources, knowledge and experience through furnishing one reference source for business information, resources and experts from around the world, and protected from non-productive and meaningless side issues.

The contents of the portal

The ISBC provides a wide range of services, the database that the website contains is considered the main service the portal offers as a way to interaction between the member worldwide. Services are broken down as follows:

- Database containing 33,000 M/SMEs in 140 different countries
- M/SMEs direct services:
  - Business discussion groups
  - Marketing tips
  - Information on some important business issues such as the role of IT and web technologies, international trade shows, advertising strategies, VAT, etc.
  - A link to other business-related sites addressing business, marketing or SMEs issues, government agencies, etc.
  - A copy of GVU internet users survey
  - Listing of Harmonized Codes

The site mechanism

The site mechanism is very basic, having a free-of-charge searchable database on M/SMEs with the following search criteria:

Company Name
Activity Sector
City
Country
Zip Code

In addition, the site also provide some basic and simple services that were described above, the site contains no toolbars, however, clickable URLs of the different services are listed in the main page, and in the bottom of each page of the website. The site is only available in the English language.
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