

CALL FOR PAPERS



Offshore services in Global Value Chains: New drivers of structural change in Latin America and the Caribbean?

Santiago, Chile; 18-19 October 2012

Venue: ECLAC

Organized by: ECLAC, WTO-chairs Buenos Aires/Mexico/Santiago and REDLAS



In cooperation with: World Trade Institute

OVERVIEW

The 2008-09 economic and financial crisis accelerated shifts towards the South both in terms of global demand, production networks and global value chains (GVC). The spread of information and communication technologies and the search for economies of scale and new sources of technical efficiency have facilitated in particular the unbundling of services activities and cross-border trade, particularly business services. Thus, offshore services in particular have emerged as a dynamic sector in the past two decades and are increasingly inducing new patterns of structural change in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).



Offshore services began with the outsourcing of information technologies to external firms (IT maintenance, basic software operations, hosting, data entry and conversion) and gradually evolved to various forms of business process outsourcing (BPO) which in turn comprise enterprise resource planning (ERP), human resource management (HRM) and customer relationship management (CRM). Now the challenge is to upgrade to knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) which include research and development (R&D); product development and more advanced vertical functions and activities in the value chain.



In LAC this sector has also suffered less from the past crisis than other sectors in the real economy since offshore services are typically business-to-business and based on multi-year contracts, which counteract the downturns of the business cycle, consumer demand and price volatility (Gereffi and Fernandez-Stark, 2010). One of the key issues to be examined are the structural changes taking place in business services before and after the crisis. However, evidence on these issues for Latin America and the Caribbean remains scant and elusive.



In this context, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Latin American and Caribbean Network on Services Research (REDLAS) and the WTO chairs in Mexico City (ITAM), Santiago (University of Chile), and Buenos Aires (FLACSO Argentina) in cooperation with the World Trade Institute (University of Bern) organize a joint academic conference which seeks to enhance the knowledge and exchange views on the following topics:

- a) What evidence is available on the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean in these offshore service type value chains, in sectors such as software and business and knowledge process outsourcing (BPO and KBO) and back-office services?
- b) What country evidence is available on how logistics, financial services, and specific business services have promoted the integration or upgrading in value chains?
- c) Is there evidence on the role for regional and north-south free trade agreements (FTAs) and foreign direct investment in promoting value chains in services?
- d) Inclusive character of value chains: What examples are available on services value chains that have integrated SMEs? Have these firms succeeded in upgrading their participation in these chains? What factors may explain their integration and/or upgrading in these chains? What is the importance of economic geography of the industry in terms of factor cost advantages?
- e) If the market is consolidating on the supply side, how can local economies and SME compete against large economies of scale of giant service providers?
- f) Which policies may promote the integration and upgrading in services value chains and in industry specific higher value added activities? What is role of government incentives? Human capital development policies? Investment in infrastructure?
- g) What evidence is available on learning mechanisms (learning by doing; learning by interacting; learning by using; learning to learn, learning in working) and the productive and technological feedbacks which operate in different types of GVC (e.g. apparel vis-à-vis offshore services)?
- h) Is there empirical evidence for developing countries to confirm the supporting role of the innovation system in GVC-driven learning and innovation processes?

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Around three keynote speakers will be invited to the meeting, including leading academics in this field and prominent policy makers from WTO and governments in the region.

KEY DATES

- Mid March: publication of Call for papers
- 1 June 2012: deadline paper or abstract submission
- 15 August 2012: authors are informed on acceptance of their paper (abstract)
- 30 September 2012: deadline submission full papers and pre-registration
- 18-19 October 2012: Conference
- 15 November 2012: authors are informed on selection of papers to be published in special issue of a journal.

Interested persons must send their full papers or abstracts by 1 June 2012 via email to conference.offshoreservices@gmail.com . Full papers should not exceed 10,000 words in pdf or Word format in English or Spanish.

WHAT IS REDLAS?

The Latin American and Caribbean Network on Services Research (REDLAS) is a new network of research groups and individuals active in services research and policy formulation, mainly located in Latin America and Caribbean. REDLAS members come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds: economics, management sciences, geography, sociology, psychology, political sciences and planning. Most are based in universities and research institutes in the region, but some are employed in government or the private sector. REDLAS had its first meeting, combined with the first Brazilian Symposium on Services Science, in Brasilia from 17-19 November 2010 with over 70 participants and 90 papers presented. REDLAS is being supported by the European Association for Research in Services (www.reser.net).

