



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

## OECD SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC STATISTICS EXPERT GROUP (STESSEG)

### Item 4: Task Force on the Use of Administrative Data for Short-term Economic Statistics: Summary of National Feedback

David Brackfield  
Statistics Directorate, OECD

Meeting:  
27 – 28 June 2005

Room 3  
OECD Headquarters, Paris  
Starting at 9:30 a.m. on the first day

## **ITEM 4: TASK FORCE ON THE USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FOR SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC STATISTICS**

### **SUMMARY OF NATIONAL FEEDBACK**

#### **United Kingdom**

The UK welcomes the proposed handbook.

Response to the questions in section 4:

1. Can the handbook meet the needs of both centralised and decentralised NSOs in different stages of development in regards the use of administrative data or should it focus on a specific group, e.g NSOs that are starting to use administrative data for the first time?

In principle, the UK believes that this should be possible. However, there may be separate issues which need to be addressed in each case (centralized/decentralized) and the handbook should take account of these.

2. Should the handbook try and deal with specific complex statistical methods employed to deal with administrative data especially in regards to the sheer size and sampling techniques involved? Alternatively the handbook could just focus on the general models and underlying assumptions for dealing with administrative data and only provide references to detailed technical papers which explain complex statistical methods that have been applied in some countries.

We believe it would be unwise to try and cover all eventualities in the handbook. The disparate nature of administrative sources is likely to preclude more than a discussion of more general models.

3. Should the proposed handbook look at expanding on the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland (see paragraph 9)? This could involve looking at forming a partnership with Eurostat or using the Eurostat work to date as a starting point?

This point is worth pursuing at the STESEG in June.

4. Should the proposed handbook place more emphasis on presenting case studies or focus more on the issues presented in the scope document such as; quality, timeliness, and coverage – in a general overall sense?

The UK believes that case studies are best dealt with in the specific papers which can be placed on the OECD website, rather than in the handbook itself.

5. Should the proposed handbook be an actual publication or be presented in a more dynamic format such as the timeliness framework (<http://www.oecd.org/std/research/timeliness>). This later approach would gather together papers and documents, logically structured and presented, and place these in a usable and easily accessible format together with the appropriate content information on the internet?

The UK would prefer to see both a handbook on more general issues associated with the use of administrative data, and a resource of existing papers/documents.

Some general comments:

The handbook should also recognise some of the limitations in using administrative data (e.g. control over definitions over time, control over quality assurance).

It will be important that the handbook is not too prescriptive and should use examples from different countries to illustrate what is considered good practice. We believe that a pragmatic approach rather than anything too theoretical would work best.

One general point is that not all NSOs are as sophisticated in their use of admin data as the Scandinavian countries. Whilst NSOs may aim for register based statistics, in the short term there may be benefits to gain from using aggregate data. It would be useful if the handbook covered the principles behind utilising aggregate administrative data as well as register/microdata. The quality and coverage considerations for aggregate data are slightly different than for register based data. A lot of work has been done in the UK to develop a data quality policy to cover aggregate data.

## Italy - ISTAT

Istat's position concerning the five points presented in the paper for discussion, can be summarized as follows:

- 1) In our view the handbook on Administrative data should provide a comprehensive review of the issues faced by NSOs in the utilisation of administrative data for the production of short-term (macro) economic indicators. In this respect, the distinction between centralised and decentralised statistical system made by the paper is not completely clear, as it seems to affect mainly organizational matters and institutional arrangements that can be considered at the margin of the handbook focus, while the main issues in the use of information coming from administrative sources (timing, quality, coverage) are not directly related to the institutional setting of national statistical systems. Furthermore, independently from differences in institutional setting, the handbook must play the role of disseminating international standards able to improve the confrontability and coherence across member states of statistical indicators based on administrative data.
- 2) It is difficult to decide at the onset about how to deal with the discussion of technical matters concerning the treatment of large dataset of administrative data, as well as of methodologies to be applied in different stages of the statistical process (sampling, imputation, estimation). A general review of the main approaches utilised in member countries to tackle this kind of issues seems in order; however the scope should be probably limited to providing some basic tools and elements to be further developed through systematic referencing of the available literature (in particular concerning empirical applications).
- 3) Indeed the handbook must not duplicate work already made by Eurostat, but rather expand its scope in the field of short term economic indicators, leaving in the background issues that are mainly related to the use of administrative data in structural statistics and, even more, in statistical registers.
- 4) As for the choice between presentation of actual case studies and discussion of general issues a balanced approach should be pursued: the discussion concerning quality, timing, and coverage of administrative data should be developed coupling a general and comprehensive approach with a great deal of empirical references and practical examples concerning specific short-term domains and national settings.
- 5) While the proposed "dynamic format" is appealing, it should probably be based on a design including well articulated presentations that can provide the basic elements concerning the problem at hand and help the users to find the relevant papers and documents; in comparison with the timeliness framework the administrative data handbook is likely to need more articulated (and also longer) texts.

## **Slovak Republic**

1. From our point of view as NSO starting to use administrative data for the first time it would be for us more convenient to have available a handbook focusing on such a specific group. However, general approach could help all NSO to improve the quality in the field of administrative data. Therefore, we prefer more comprehensive approach with a specific chapter for starting NSO. This could be only a set of recommendations stating the particular steps of implementation.
2. From the point of a handbook it would be better to deal with general models with the references to detailed technical papers.
3. In our view, forming a partnership with Eurostat would ensure common approach and avoid double work.
4. Presenting of case studies is the most important issue in this field.
5. As an expert dealing often with methodology issues actual publication of the handbook would be more preferable. It is not always possible to work only on Internet. We think the combination of both alternatives would be the best solution.
6. At time being there are no administrative data papers available in SO SR. Nevertheless, we will supply OECD with possible future documents.

## **Australia**

### 1. Focus of the handbook

As will come through in comments relating to points below, it is considered useful if the handbook could be a living document. It will grow and develop over time as organisations become more advanced in their use of administrative data. Initially therefore, it would be appropriate if the 'handbook' focused on issues to be considered by NSOs that are starting out. Problems facing organisations that are more advanced in their use of administrative data are likely to be more complex and more difficult to address in a general handbook. As identified in points raised below, these issues might be better addressed via case studies.

### 2. Addressing complex statistical methods

The core of the handbook should focus on general models and underlying assumptions for dealing with administrative data. Dealing with very large administrative datasets introduces some complexities that may limit the amount of validation work that can be done. Again, a case study approach may be the most useful approach to shed light on techniques used in dealing with such complexities.

### 3. Expanding on work done by Eurostat and Finland

The handbook should be the first port of call for organisations considering the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. As well as a broad set of guidelines, it should also provide indexed references to papers describing useful research or development work that has been done in particular fields.

### 4. Case study approach

Clearly quality, timeliness and coverage are very important issues to address when assessing how administrative data can be used. Most agencies are going to understand the importance of these issues; the main difficulties will centre around how one identifies shortcomings in particular datasets and how these shortcomings might be dealt with. It is considered that case studies would be most useful in helping agencies assess data sources and in helping them develop methods to deal with identified shortcomings.

Often it is not until the data are being used in a particular application that the more subtle shortcomings become obvious. Case studies would help agencies anticipate the potential of similar problems occurring in their environment.

#### 5. Format for the handbook

As mentioned above, the concept of a 'living document' is strongly supported. The core material would provide broad guidelines for the use of administrative data, but the most useful material is likely to be contained in papers and documents that address particular applications. This material needs to be logically structured and presented in an easily accessible repository.

#### 6. Additional papers

The Australian Bureau of Statistics can provide papers describing its experiences using administrative data to compile short-term economic statistics.

## **USA**

The development of a handbook on the use of administrative data in compiling economic statistics will be a significant undertaking. The extensive and diverse current use of administrative data by statistical organizations would suggest that the handbook should focus on statistical organizations that are first starting to explore the topic or are considering expanding applications. Because of the wide range of uses of administrative data and the complexities of the applications, BLS suggests that the handbook focus on the more basic issues and approaches. In that sense, the handbook would be a general one. However, actual program uses addressing an issue would be appropriate for the handbook and may stimulate consideration of the approach in other statistical organizations.

The recommendation for a general approach to the handbook with actual applications (program case studies) included is also a practical one. While it is possible to describe a single program's application of the use of administrative data—as a benchmark or a sample frame or an input to a statistical model—in chapter of the handbook, such a description would not be adequate documentation for another statistical organization to use if they wished to replicate the work. For example, in each of the BLS programs that use administrative data, the operational details, complex statistical methods, and other program aspects constitute individual handbooks. To complete the description of the existing uses of administrative data in the handbook, references or links to further technical detail can be included.

The more sophisticated applications of administrative data use can also be included in the handbook, but, again, as references or links to technical descriptions and papers.

It is recommended that the more dynamic approach used for the timeliness framework also be used for the administrative data handbook. It would allow for not only easy access but also easy updating and linkage to papers and conferences on the most current developments in administrative data use.

## **Mexico**

### Introduction

The main objective of the Task Force is to provide NSOs (National Statistical Offices) who are using or planning to use administrative data in the compilation of short-term economic statistics with a readily available source of help and this will be achieved through the production of a handbook.

Comments requested on the following points to aid the discussion at STESEG and the Task Force meeting to be held on 27 June

- Can the handbook meet the needs of both centralized and decentralized NSOs in different stages of development in regards the use of administrative data, or should it focus on a specific group, e.g. NSOs that are starting to use administrative data for the first time?

It would be advisable that the final handbook intends to meet both centralized and decentralized NSOs in different stages of development, but maybe paying special attention to those that are starting to use administrative data for the first time because is more difficult to start where common citizens' statistical culture is low. Nevertheless, it is useful to have the view of more complex targets that aim the first steps towards developed stages.

- Should the handbook try and deal with specific complex statistical methods employed to deal with administrative data especially in regards to the sheer size and sampling techniques involved?

In order to make a practical handbook we suggest to focus on the general models and the main assumptions for dealing with administrative data. It would be also important to provide references to detailed technical papers about complex statistical methods applied in some countries.

- Should the proposed handbook look at expanding on the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland? This could involve looking at forming a partnership with Eurostat or using the Eurostat work to date as a starting point?

It is advisable to take advantages of what it is done but it is also important to consider situations prevailed in other countries with different stages of development related to administrative registers.

- Should the proposed handbook place more emphasis on presenting case studies or focus more on the issues presented in the scope document such as; quality, timeliness, and coverage – in a general overall sense?

We think it can be useful to mix both, i.e. presenting case studies focused on these three issues. In this way, those NSOs that are starting can focus their batteries on these important data characteristics. It is important to keep in mind that the handbook intends to provide help and those who are starting need the most important source of help.

- Should the proposed handbook be an actual publication or be presented in a more dynamic format such as the timeliness framework?

We suggest the second one.

## Germany

Can the handbook meet the needs of both centralised and decentralised NSOs in different stages of development... or should it focus on a specific group....?

The handbook should give an overview of best practices with a focus on NSOs starting to use administrative data for short term statistics.

In the current situation data already exist in OECD countries for the most important fields of short term statistics. Administrative data become more and more important in view of a “reduction of response burden” and “cost saving”. In this situation the function of a handbook should be to give first guidance to people who want to check the current use of administrative data for short term statistics in other countries and learn more about the possibilities and problems met in practice. At the same time it should help people who already use administrative data to check their own methods by means of information on the practices in other countries and on best practices.

This description of the function of the handbook leads to the requirement that the handbook should focus more on centralised national statistical systems (which include regionally decentralised systems like in Germany) than on decentralised statistical systems where administrative data providers produce the statistics.

Should the handbook try and deal with specific complex statistical methods ...Alternatively the handbook could just focus on the general models and underlying assumptions...”

We prefer a handbook that focuses on general methods and underlying assumptions. Specific complex statistical methods are often linked to specific situations that vary from country to country in the field of administrative data. The handbook should give a short overview of the methods and provide references to technical papers which explain the application of these methods in some countries.

Should the proposed handbook look at expanding the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland?

In our view it would be very useful to take the work done by Eurostat and Finland as a starting point. On the one hand, double work would be avoided, on the other, experience in a broader context could be incorporated from the beginning.

However, the Eurostat handbook can only serve as a starting point for European countries. On the one hand, the scope of the Eurostat handbook (and the handbook of Statistics Finland) is much broader: the use of administrative data for business statistics in general is described and the focus is in fact more on structural business statistics and registers than on short term statistics. On the other hand, an update is necessary to include the current developments in using administrative data in short term statistics since the end of the last century. The country report of Germany, for example, does not contain any information on the use of administrative data for short term statistics.

For this reason the Eurostat handbook could serve primarily to describe the general background for using administrative data in different countries, the OECD handbook should, however, focus mainly on the use for short term statistics.

Should the proposed handbook place more emphasis on presenting case studies or focus more on the issues... in a general overall sense?

The handbook should focus more on the issues in a general overall sense by giving an overview of (best) practices. Some case studies could be included in short form for illustrative purposes. Since administrative data are always country specific, references to more detailed papers on national practices seem to be better suited than detailed case studies in the handbook.

Should the proposed handbook be an actual publication or be presented in a more dynamic format....?

In our view there is no clear “either..or”. In principle, a more dynamic format such as the timeliness framework is well suited for technical papers and in-depth national case studies (see answers above). A more general handbook could be included as a core part in this format (non-dynamic, document of the state of the art 2005/2006). It is less important whether the handbook will be an actual publication or not.

## **Austria**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE DATA**

- We think a handbook can meet the needs of centralised and decentralised NSOs in different stages of development in regard of the use of administrative data.
- The handbook should show ways, how to use administrative data illustrated by examples used in praxis. For interested readers linkages (reference list) to complex statistical methods should be added.
- In general the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland should form the basis for the development of the handbook.

- The handbook should present a balanced mix of presenting case studies and issues presented in the scope document (quality, timeliness etc.).
- The handbook should be presented in a more dynamic format, always updated by experiences and easily access for users.

## Finland

### 1. Administrative Data Task Force

The work of the administrative task force is expected to be largely advantageous in exchanging information on using administrative sources of data.

Can the handbook meet the needs of both centralised and decentralised NSOs in different stages of development in regards the use of administrative data or should it focus on a specific group, e.g. NSOs that are starting to use administrative data for the first time?

The handbook shouldn't focus solely on the first steps needed to adapt administrative data sources. There are some difficult issues which have to be tackled differently when working with administrative data. Such issues are e.g. improvement of timeliness, benchmarking and measurement of error. The handbook could inform the readers of these possible hazards, but perhaps not discuss the specific problems in great detail. Should the handbook try and deal with specific complex statistical methods employed to deal with administrative data especially in regards to the sheer size and sampling techniques involved? Alternatively the handbook could focus on the general models and underlying assumptions for dealing with administrative data and only provide references to detailed technical papers which explain complex statistical methods that have been applied in some countries.

The handbook shouldn't be very technical. As no generally accepted set of techniques exists yet, it would be too ambitious to try to define best practises in terms of specific methods.

Should the proposed handbook look at expanding on the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland (see paragraph 9)? This could involve looking at forming a partnership with Eurostat or using the Eurostat work to date as a starting point?

The documents mentioned in paragraph 9 deal mostly with annual statistics. The document's should be taken as a starting point, but they have to be re-viewed critically, because the challenges related to annual statistics are in some ways different than those of the monthly (or quarterly) statistics.

Co-operation with Eurostat would be a way to disseminate the work of the task force more efficiently.

Should the proposed handbook place more emphasis on presenting case studies or focus more on the issues presented in the scope document such as; quality, timeliness, and coverage – in a general overall sense?

It might be best if the handbook was a general document. Case studies wouldn't be boundlessly useful because the conditions of each NSO differ.

## Netherlands

### General comment

It might be difficult to stay within the defined scope, because there might be a lot of 'Long-term-statistics'-literature about administrative data-sources available. Implementing too much of this information would not improve the quality of a resulting handbook. Another important aspect is that a final result for the handbook should be manageable. The subjects covered in the 'body' should not be too detailed; detailed matters should be moved to appendices (Bullet 2)

1) Questions for the use of administrative data will be (for a large part) the same for both centralised and decentralised Offices. Maybe it is easier for a centralised Office to combine different administrative data sources. It is a good idea to cover differences about centralised/decentralised in a handbook.

The handbook could contain two points. (A) Cover start-up-problems if administrative data is going to be used (for Offices that start using registers). Such as: maintaining contacts with data suppliers, (specific?) problems with setting up the contracts for obtaining the data from registers, coverage of variables, etc. (B) Discussing methodology for obtaining statistics from administrative data-sources is interesting for both starting and long-term users of administrative data.

3) It is not sensible to rewrite existing manuals. Copying existing information should be avoided as much as possible. It looks a good start to create summaries from the existing documents (Eurostat + Finland) for the parts that deal with short-term statistics. Further, the new handbook should give (significant) steps forward.

4) Especially for the use of administrative data sources case studies are important. These studies will not map 1-on-1 to the desired result of the reader of the manual, because each situation for using administrative data is different. However, these cases will give more insight in the problems/advantages of using administrative data. And into possible solutions.

Texts about quality, timeliness and coverage might easily get general and superficial, especially because the situation for the administrative data sources used in various countries might be different.

5) No experience with dynamic formats. So no opinion given.

## **Greece**

Administrative data are data that were originally collected for a definite non-statistical purpose. The agent that supplies the data to the statistical institute is different than the statistical service in terms of function. Examples of administrative sources that are not primarily collected for statistical purposes are VAT register, social security data, etc.

The main benefits of using administrative sources are multiple like: reduction of burden on data supplies, while statistics can be compiled more frequently, timely and with full coverage of target population. Other advantages of using administrative data are presented in the paper.

Data should be collected in a manner that causes a minimal inconvenience and costs to the respondents through agreements and protocols for collaboration. Given that the legal framework in countries does not oblige the interdependence and interdepartmental transfer of administrative data, some model procedures are needed like basic legal status, respect of confidentiality rules, the development of mechanisms, the organisation of the public sector and the cooperation between statistical and non-statistical agencies.

The stages of development of administrative data depend on the existent of legal status under the recognition of NSO as part of public administration which may be separate and autonomous.

The handbook for the use of administrative data should not only focus on NSOs which are going to use this kind of data for the first time (or use them but not very extensively), but also it could be extended in order to provide additional information and guidelines for centralised NSOs in order to meet their needs.

Furthermore, it would be useful if the proposed handbook would focus on the general models and would describe procedures for dealing with administrative data. It would also be good if there are references to detailed technical papers which explain complex statistical methods applied in specific countries. In that way everyone who is interested for a special aspect could have the information he needs.

In addition, special issues should be clarified as: detailed description of data covered, frequency of supply, quality standards, confidentiality rules, etc.

Especially the issue of quality is very important. The main components of quality are relevance, accuracy, timeliness, comparability, coherence, completeness and any further discussion about these topics is useful.

The handbook should also, propose solutions for many problems which have to be overcome like matching administrative and statistical records, consistency of data, different definitions, classifications and time periods. Moreover, proposals for obtaining an effective planning management would be helpful for the NSOs.

In addition, it would be better if the handbook not only presented general issues such as quality, timeliness and coverage but also included some case studies which would give a more practical scope of the issues. In any way the work that has already been done by Eurostat and Finland should be taken into account. The idea of using an electronic format of the administrative data issue instead of an actual publication is very good because in that way there is going to be a better structure and the user could move from general to special topics. This kind of presentation could include more papers without being difficult for the reader to follow the general flow of the topics.

## **Italy – Bank**

- Question 1 at page 1 is specifically addressed to NSOs.
- Relationship between the proposed OECD/STESSEG handbook and the existing ones, in particular that developed by Eurostat. As mentioned in the Section “Review of Papers Received to Date”, Eurostat has already made available a quite comprehensive overview on the use of administrative sources, for 17 EU countries. Hence, in my view the issue is: is there any need for an alternative document on the same issue, or, instead, a joint project OECD-Eurostat, involving possibly Statistics Finland which apparently has a lot of experience in this field, might be more fruitful? My preference is for the latter option. In particular, STESEG Task Force might integrate/update the current Eurostat document to produce a new version including information on non-EU countries. This approach minimises the risk of duplicating the efforts to improve our knowledge in the field of the use of administrative data.
- The handbook should report an overview of all the debated issues, without being too technical. Actual statistical methods employed to deal with administrative data and technicalities should be surveyed, referring for details to the existing papers (references should be provided).
- The document should focus on the issues presented in the scope document; case studies are useful as examples but in principle they should not be the focus of the document.
- My preference is for an actual publication.

## **Poland**

The idea of elaborating by the Administrative Data Task Force the handbook regarding the use of administrative data in the scope of short-term economic statistics domain and its wide dissemination to National Statistical Institutions is a valuable initiative and very useful in the context of needs of polish public statistics.

We suggest that the handbook for National Statistical Institutions should be elaborated regardless of the use of administrative data level, including the short-term economic statistics domain.

We suggest, that the handbook should:

1. deal with treatment models with administrative data and with detailed methodological information in the scope of: use of administrative data in the sample schemes, imputation, estimation, benchmarking techniques.

2. include elaboration of the short-term economic statistics procedure based on administrative data, and creation of good practices concerning increasing of administrative data range from the currently used registers, using of administrative data accessible for statistics but not used currently.
3. discuss issues regarding “advantages” and “disadvantages” of using of administrative data from the point of view of its use for statistical reasons (especially in the context of assuring of statistical data quality), and regarding problems connected with using of registers in short-term statistics domain (the information coverage/scope, quality/timeliness) and the ways of their solving.
4. include references to detailed technical papers concerning the above mentioned issues, drawing up in other countries, and review of the works done so far by Eurostat and Finland, including involved in appendix to progress report. The above mentioned studies should become a starting point to further works of the Task Force.

The handbook should be available in an electronic format (the kind of an interactive handbook on the website of OECD), with the possibility to get there via links to more detailed papers and documents, logically structured and presented.

## **New Zealand**

Paper – Administrative data task force progress report

- Recommend that the focus for this handbook should be on national statistical offices that are starting to use administrative data for the first time.
- Recommend the handbook should focus on the general models and underlying assumptions for dealing with administrative data.
- Without reading the Eurostat and Finland work in detail I would see that it would be beneficial to expand on work done so far.
- Recommend the handbook should focus on issues presented in the scope document such as; quality, timeliness, and coverage. It is important to note that while the issues faced when using administrative data are broadly similar – each are unique to the individual country therefore case studies may prove useful. For example Statistics New Zealand has had to face the issue of businesses filing goods and services tax (VAT) returns for different frequencies (monthly, two monthly or six monthly).
- Recommend the handbook should be presented in a more dynamic format (i.e. accessible via the internet)
- Additional papers to assist in the production of the handbook:
  - A paper Rochelle Barrow (from Statistics New Zealand) presented at the 2004 STESEG meeting <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/23/32108022.pdf>
  - A link to the Statistics New Zealand website with information regarding a development project integrating existing employer and employee administrative information <http://www.stats.govt.nz/additional-information/leed/reports.htm>
  - A link to the Statistics New Zealand website with information regarding the development project mentioned above as well as how Statistics New Zealand’s Business Frame is updated using (among other things) administrative data. <http://www.stats.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/1E5460C3-0519-4935-B392-1DD75D6F3D7F/0/TheBusinessFrameandLEED.pdf>

## Denmark

In the Progress Report from The Administrative Data Task Force several questions are raised.

In general, we think that a handbook will absolutely be useful, but it will, of course, require a lot of efforts to produce.

To begin with, we think that such a handbook could be produced electronically so it is possible to get access to chapters, which are being finalised. The handbook could include topics of known interest, including – as you mention in the paper - for example:

general models

chapters for specific groups, e.g. chapters for NSO starting to use administrative data for the first time

special focus on quality aspects as, for example, timeliness, accuracy and coverage

specific complex statistical methods employed

an overview showing the current uses

case studies

literature

Another important topic we could propose is the relationship between the administrative units and the statistical units in the Central Business Register, and how to tackle this.

But many topics could be included provided that there is an interest in dealing with the topic.

From this dynamic format of a book, selections could be made, and an actual publication could be produced – if there is an interest for such one.

For a starting point we think it would be most useful to create the proposed table showing the current uses of administrative data for short-term statistics, so it is possible to identify which countries use administrative sources for which indicators. The use could be divided into administrative source as a direct source and administrative source used indirectly (for example, when editing data collected from questionnaires, grossing up or reducing samples for questionnaire-based indicators).

Such an overview could immediately give an idea from which countries to get more specific information and inspiration – a sort of best practice.

## Switzerland

- There is a great interest for such a kind of handbook, particularly for SFSO that belongs to the centralized NSO. In the case of Switzerland, we are studying the possible use of administrative data for several economic statistics. The business register, which is the cornerstone of the use of administrative Data, has already integrated several administrative sources of information: VAT, registers of the cantons, etc, and the development continues in this direction. As far as the short term economic statistics are concerned SFSO does not use administrative at the moment. At the moment we are examining different kind of administrative data as possible sources. Under these circumstances, we estimate that such a handbook could be very useful.

- The handbook should put the emphasis on the general principles and models and just mention the technical references treating of the complex statistical methods. If some standards methods emerge from these references, they could advantageously be included in the handbook.

- It seems important to us not to reproduce a work which would already have been made by Eurostat and to find a maximum of synergy with work already completed. It would be convenient to hold account of the experience gained by Eurostat and, if necessary, to complete this work.
- In a first part, the handbook should present the general principles and requirements of such a statistic, notably concerning quality, timeliness, etc. In a second part, it would be interesting to illustrate these principles and methods with the practice of the countries (Synthesis).
- All the documents should be accessible on Internet. Of course, a dynamic format would be a very convenient solution.

## Norway

Statistics Norway use administrative data in three different short-term statistics:

- a) Monthly Statistics on turnover of oil and gas extraction, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity and gas supply - Section C, D and Division 40 (NACE)
- b) Quarterly Turnover Index for transport and tourism - Section H, I and Group 92.2 (NACE)
- c) Quarterly Turnover Index of real estate, renting and business activities - Section K (NACE)

For a) the data come mainly from a monthly statistical survey with questionnaires. However, slightly 20 per cent of the turnover statistics is maintained by data from Directorate of Taxes (Administrative data). The figures are grossed up from the survey sample through a ratio estimator based on the administrative data from the Directorate of Taxes (bi-monthly) and from the survey (monthly).

For b) and c) the methods used are principally the same. For the industries that are excluded from VAT we use questionnaires to collect data. For the VAT-bound industries we collect data from the Directorate of Taxes' VAT register. The VAT-register is a bi-monthly data source and we have to calculate the quarterly figures on basis on the periodically figures provided by the Directorate of Taxes.

Our use of administrative data has some key challenges as stated in the paper. For monthly statistics timeliness is the main problem since data from Directorate of Taxes both are bi-monthly and is usually available too late according to our obligations for publication. Even the coverage is a problem because of differences in definitions of statistical unit and because some businesses report their turnover to the Tax Directorate only once a year.

Based on our experience with administrative data the scope and focus of the Handbook seems to be both relevant and will meet the needs of Statistics Norway. As we see it the handbook should place emphasis on presenting case studies and current best methods (good practices).

## Czech Republic

Administrative sources are used for updating the statistical register and for the purposes of particular non-profit oriented branch statistics.

By the collection of statistical data, the CZSO is substantially dependent on information gathering from reporting units – enterprises. In recent years, the CZSO has made a great step towards data gathering from administrative sources, which could lessen the respondents' burden. However, the administrative sources are relatively limited in the Czech Republic at this time, not all administrative sources can generate an aggregation for whole economy or branch yet. Another disadvantage, which limits the usage of

administrative sources especially in terms of short-term statistics, is a relatively large distance from the reference period to which they refer.

Principally two administrative sources are being used by the monthly survey at this time.

They are the information on the number of insured persons (from payments for obligatory insurance for employees) and data on yearly turnover from tax statements. This information has been used only in the phase of preparation of sample frame – for stating the activeness or inactiveness of the unit (tax statements' data) and for scale breakdown – according to number of employees – into right strata. Both administrative sources are in time of designing of sample – at the beginning of reference year T – already “obsolete”; the data on number of employees only for September T-1 and yearly turnover for T-2 is available.

## Japan

- Can the handbook meet the needs of both centralized NSOs in different stages of development in regards the use of administrative data or should it focus on a specific group, e.g. NSOs that are starting to use administrative data for the first time?

→ Japanese statistical system is a decentralized one. Therefore, the contents of the handbook should be useful for both centralized and decentralized countries.

- Should the handbook try and deal with specific complex statistical methods employed to deal with administrative data especially in regards to the sheer size and sampling techniques involved? Alternatively the handbook could just focus on the general models and underlying assumptions for dealing with administrative data and only provide references to detailed technical papers which explain complex statistical methods that have been applied in some countries.

→ The various statistical methods should be included and introduced in the handbook from the viewpoint of both theoretical and practical aspects.

- Should the proposed handbook look at expanding on the work done so far by Eurostat and Finland (see paragraph 9)? This could involve looking at forming a partnership with Eurostat or using the Eurostat work to date as a standing point?

→ Nothing especially.

- Should the proposed handbook place more emphasis on presenting case studies or focus more on the issues presented in the scope document such as; quality, timeliness, and coverage-in a general overall sense?

→ The proposed handbook should highlight the good practices.

- Should the proposed handbook be an actual publication or be presented in a more dynamic format such as the timeliness framework (<http://www.oecd.org/std/research/timeliness>). This later approach would gather together papers and documents, logically structured and presented, and place these in a usable and easily accessible format together with the appropriate content information on the internet?

→ Various presentation forms would be appropriate.

- Additional papers; STESEG members are encouraged to provide administrative data papers of interest to the task force to assist them with the production of the handbook.

→ In the “New Directions in the Development of Government Statistical Services” by the meeting of the Heads of the Statistical Departments of the Cabinet Office and Ministries in June 2003, the followings are pointed out:

#### Utilization of administrative records

##### <Background and current situation>

The utilization of administrative records is very important from the viewpoints of trying to simplify and streamline data collection for statistical surveys, and to reduce the burdens on respondents. Promotion of such utilization is also recommended in “New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade”.

A study from the utilization of administrative records into statistical surveys and policies relating to such utilization, including investigations into the publication of statistics based on administrative records, is underway with the “Working Group for Studies on Policies to Utilize Administrative Records”, the second study committee of the Conference on Promotion of New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade. The Cabinet Office and ministries are also looking at ways of simplifying individual statistical surveys by utilizing administrative records.

However, administrative records are data obtained from administrative reports for the purpose of issuing permits and notifications, and thereby prohibited from being used for non-specified purposes. Privacy and confidentiality caveats are in force. The range and contents of data in these records are very diverse. Currently, therefore, utilization of administrative records is seen as limited. On the other hand, there is pressure to utilize administrative records as basic supplementary data to provide information that may be missing from collected questionnaires. The recent development and application of information and communications technologies are expected to make it more feasible to utilize these records.

##### <Basic direction>

- (1) From the viewpoint of reducing of reporting burdens, efforts should be made to positively utilize administrative records in the preparation of statistical data, while taking all necessary care to maintain confidentiality.
- (2) Research into methods of utilizing administrative records should be implemented in line with the trend toward computerization of administrative records.
- (3) Policies for positively utilizing administrative records should be considered from the viewpoint of compensating for shortfalls in data obtained from questionnaires.
- (4) Efforts should be made to prepare, and update, population information through the utilization of administrative records, thereby reducing the burdens on respondents, and improving the accuracy of survey results.

##### <Concrete measures>

- (1) The Cabinet Office and ministries should initiate research into policies for positively utilizing administrative records in the preparation of major economic indicators, such as production, equipment investment, and capital assets. At the same time, there should also be a study into the potential for supplementing data shortfalls.
- (2) The Cabinet Office and ministries should proceed with a study into positive utilization of administrative records such as register book information and securities reports, in line with computerization of these records.
- (3) In order to move ahead with the studies mentioned in (1) and (2), above, the Cabinet Office and ministries should establish a research unit which includes responsible members of the Cabinet Office and those ministries that maintain administrative records, and conduct studies into policies for positive utilization of administrative records, by fiscal year 2005.

(4) The MPHPT, working closely with the Cabinet Office and other ministries, should utilize administrative records to begin preparing and updating population information, of the SFEE, by fiscal year 2005.