

**21<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers  
- International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames**

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**OECD progress report 2008**

**Country: OECD**

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## **1. Organisation**

OECD's Statistics Directorate works since 2002 also on questions relating to business register design, the linkages between registers and questions relating to promote and facilitate good practice across OECD countries, in particular those outside the EU boundary. A major driving force behind this increased interest and relatively new work was the Ministerial Mandate received in Istanbul 2004 asking the Statistics Directorate amongst other statistical issues - also to look into these questions in the context of enhancing the quantitative underpinning of SME policies and analysis. All OECD work on SMEs and also on Entrepreneurship currently underway are, at least partly, motivated by this Mandate. OECD is an international organisation having 30 developed market economies as members, but is working regularly with non-member-countries (so-called outreach work). Five countries are engaged in accession discussions with OECD. Being not a supranational body, OECD can as a general rule only issue recommendation, not regulations. Since OECDs EU countries follow EU regulations, OECD tries to statistically "bridge the gap" between EU and Non -EU countries it works with. A permanent challenge is to promote statistical consistency across OECD through comparative analysis and recommendations. Particularly in the field of business and SME statistics, this task is complex and difficult because of different statistical systems, definitions and terminology used. It goes without saying that OECD works also in SBS closely together with Eurostat (MoU for data sharing), UNIDO (UNIDO sources from OECD) and UNSD (OECD contributes to UNSDs Expert Group Discussion on Industrial Statistics).

## **2. Issues solved, problems and future plans**

Work progressed well in the following areas:

### *a) Structural Business Statistics, including SMEs and Business Demography*

One of the major developments in the Structural and Demographic Business Statistics (SDBS) activity is the improvement of the coverage of Business Demography Statistics, in relation with the OECD-Eurostat Entrepreneurship Indicators Project.

Business Demography Indicators are now being collected formally and regularly: a Business Demography questionnaire is sent annually to Non-EU Member countries along with the pre-existing 'SSIS-Structural Statistics for Industry and Services' and 'BSC-Business Statistics by Size-Class' questionnaires. Business demography data for EU countries are collected from the Eurostat database. The database includes indicators of birth, death, survival, high growth firms and gazelles based on common concepts developed in the Eurostat-OECD Manual on Business Demography Statistics ([www.oecd.org/std/industry-services/businessdemographymanual](http://www.oecd.org/std/industry-services/businessdemographymanual)), published by both

organizations in the end-2007. The employer enterprises population is used as statistical unit for this data collection. Measurement of high-growth enterprises and gazelles have been the subject of a workshop organised under the umbrella of the Entrepreneurship Indicators Programme (EIP) by the OECD in November 2007.

Additionally, for the first time in 2008, the SDBS questionnaires have been sent to accessing and BICS countries.

Regarding business microdata, the OECD has recently acquired a one year licence to use Bureau van Dijk's ORBIS database. This database containing information on over 40 million companies at a global level is being used for analytical purposes across a number of OECD Directorates – with policy implications in the areas of trade, employment, innovation and regional development. The Statistics Directorate has a focus on entrepreneurship and, with an eye to the future, reflecting the likelihood that microdata will not be available via official sources, at least, in the short-medium term, the Directorate is quality assuring the database to determine if it could one-day form an important long-term information source; certainly for OECD non member countries. With regards to official microdata sources, however, the Directorate is continuing to explore its options. It currently has remote access to business microdata managed by the Italian Central Bank, as part of a feasibility study, and will be approaching other official institutions who have these facilities in the coming year. The long-term plan is to develop a network of remote access centres to which the OECD has access, and to motivate and provide guidance and tools to institutions who are yet to move in this direction.

#### *b) Entrepreneurship Indicators Project*

A major achievement of the Entrepreneurship Indicators Program (EIP) is the first publication by the OECD of data from the EIP framework in November 2008. Data is available for 18 countries (15 EU countries and 3 non-EU countries). A selection of these indicators was included in a publication "Measuring entrepreneurship: a digest of indicators".

Further information on this publication and the EIP is available at the following address: [www.oecd.org/statistics/entrepreneurshipindicators](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/entrepreneurshipindicators)

The third meeting of the Entrepreneurship Indicators Steering Group was held in Paris on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, and the fourth meeting was held in Copenhagen, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, back-to-back with the Eurostat-Fora Workshop on Entrepreneurship Indicators: R&D and Technology.

#### *c) Linking trade and business statistics*

One of the main future development areas for external trade statistics is to link them more closely to other statistics. The linkage of trade statistics with business statistics allows to measure, on the one hand, the contribution of real economic sectors to trading, and on the other hand, to complement business data with detailed information on trade. This enables to analyze the effects of international trade to production, employment and enterprises' performances particularly interesting field is the linking of SBS data with international trade activities as measured by detailed customs statistics. The key issue here is the matching of the two registers involved. A statistically correct matching of economic characteristics with export patterns and profiles can be considered a potential goldmine for global economic analysis. Similarly, trade by size of enterprise broken down by sector of activity, by export markets, and by location (e.g. region) not only allows analyzing trade effects on employment and value added, but also to "map" performances.

Under guidance of the Business Economic Statistics and Trade (BEST) Steering Group, a first OECD Linkage Table, which is based on Eurostat's Standardisation Document Rev. 2, was sent

out to participating Non-EU-OECD member countries in June 2007. The tables are in line with Eurostat's methodology applied, but have been amended in two respects (UN classifications instead of EU classifications and OECD's Geo-Nomenclature instead of Eurostat's Geo-Nomenclature) to enable Non-EU countries to respond. Up to now, OECD has received data collection tables from Canada, the United States and Norway. In addition to that, Eurostat provided OECD with the respective (published) data tables of several EU member states for reference year 2003. OECD's database on "Trade by Enterprise Characteristics" now contains data for up to 18 countries, subdivide in five different subsets of data (by size classes, by top enterprises, by partner zones and countries, by number of partner countries and by commodity groups).

OECD will continue the close co-operation with Eurostat in this concern. Eurostat's Standardisation Exercise 2008 (Reference year 2005) will be the starting point for the next data collection on OECD-level (non-EU-OECD member countries). The concrete details will be elaborated upon the next BEST steering group meeting in 2009.

OECD has, thus, made significant progress in this policy-relevant area, enabling a world-wide view on trade by enterprise characteristics. It is OECD's intention to further fine-tune the database with respect to possible additional indicators and to enlarge the availability of countries. Unlike Eurostat, OECD cannot encourage countries to join in through financial incentives. It is, nevertheless, hoped that several countries will join in on a voluntary basis. OECD expresses its gratitude to participating Non-EU countries and to Eurostat for the excellent co-operation.

For further details:

<http://www.oecd.org/std/its/wptgs2008>

#### *d) Globalisation and Statistical System design*

Besides participating in the Eurostat/UNECE/OECD Steering Group on Business Registers, OECD is also participating in other working groups which analyse statistical requirements stemming from globalisation. A "Globalisation Reflection Group" across OECD has been set up to this effect in 2007. Some of the issues discussed touch on register design, but more focus is on the analysis of the activities of multinationals and the formulation of economic statistical units, better apt to reflect economic processes and economic control in an international perspective.

#### *e) Wiesbaden City Group Meeting*

At the 20th meeting of the Wiesbaden Group in October 2007, and in the absence of a volunteering host country, OECD declared its preparedness to host the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting at OECD 24-27 November 2008. This is in recognition of the importance OECD attaches to the work of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers, work which is fundamental for a better integration and system design of economic statistics.

For further details:

[www.oecd.org/std/industry-services/wiesbadengroup2008](http://www.oecd.org/std/industry-services/wiesbadengroup2008)