

Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers
Paris, 24 – 27 November 2008 <div style="text-align: right;"> Germany Anke Rink, Patrizia Mödinger Federal Statistical Office 24 November 2008 </div>
Country progress report 2008

1. Organisation and population of the BR

According to the federal structure of Germany, each of the federal states (so called Länder) has its own statistical office. After two mergers the number of the original 16 statistical offices of the Länder (SOL) declined from 16 to 14. On the federal level, the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) adds to that number.

The business register (BR) follows that organisation: Based on a common methodology and IT-software each SOL administrates a BR on its own with only limited access to the BR of other SOL. Thus all maintenance and data processing like updating the BR with administrative data is done locally in each SOL. Destatis is responsible for the common methodology as well as coordination and further development of the BR and receives a copy of each local register twice a year.

Within Destatis the BR is part of the division “Business Register, Coordination of Business Statistics, Classifications” which in turn is integrated into the department “Business Register, Industry, Domestic Trade”. The organisational places of the BR inside the SOL are quite different. The total level of human resources for the maintenance of the BR is about 200 persons (10 of them inside Destatis).

The BR regularly processes data from tax authorities (VAT files), the Federal Employment Agency, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Chambers of Crafts and commercial data supplier (ownership and control links). The total population of the BR amounts around 3.2 million enterprises and about 3.7 million local units.

2. Progress and developments during the year

A new databank architecture for the BR is going to be developed. The first prototype of the software is already available. It features only a limited set of functionalities but allows testing of the complex concept of different types of units and their inter-relations. Shortly new version of the prototype will be available that incorporates functionalities necessary for the extensive concept of historiography.

Beside, the software that enables the BR to report data on business demography has been developed and tested and is about to be finished. Data for the first reference year 2004 have been delivered to Eurostat in June 2008.

Based on data from a commercial data supplier (Bureau van Dijk Electronic Publishing GmbH) control links between legal units and data on the affiliation to enterprise groups have been incorporated for all businesses into the BR by the end of last year. The updating of these data will be finished by the end of this year.

The national introduction of the revised classification of economic activities (national version of NACE Rev. 2) is on progress. In February, the transition started stepwise with the automatic recoding of all units. In further steps, the quality of the codification of the non unique cases is successively improved by different means. There are 1.6 Mio units that could not be allocated to a unique code. The economically important units (345 000) were questioned on their economic activities. At the beginning of October, 78% of these units have been checked. In addition, all units

where the old classification divides on high level were investigated (347 000). The process of quality improvement for economically important units will be finished by the end of 2008.

In order to reduce the time-lag of the administrative data that are processed in the BR (reporting year vs. reference year), which currently amounts to roughly two years and to improve overall quality of the BR administrative data of periods less than a year will be used. Under the technical circumstances of the present BR, the administrative data of periods less than a year (monthly data is already available) shall reduce the time-lag for survey related purposes by a half year. The concept for this approach has been finished. The realisation is planned for 2009 and 2010.

A concept for the integration of information from a new data source, the Electronic Commercial Register, will be finished by the end of 2008. This data will improve overall quality of the BR by providing information on the existence of legal units, their true addresses and their dates of incorporation (further details in session 5).

3. Future plans

The big challenge of the business register is the finishing of the New Business register and the migration of the units from the old to the new register.

The usage of monthly administrative data, the utilisation of data of the Electronic Commercial Register and the implementation of the new business register regulation as well as the implementation of the NACE sectors agriculture and public administration will be the main work for the near future.