

21th Meeting of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers

- International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames

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Progress report 2008

Country: European Union

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1. Organisation and Population of the Business Registers

At Eurostat the Business Register (BR) section is in Unit G-1. It comprises Structural Business Statistics, Business Registers and PRODCOM. The section previously focused only on methodological development and monitoring the BR state of art in Europe. There is no BR in Eurostat yet. During 2008 the BR section has grown to 8 persons, of which 6 persons are exclusively working for the EuroGroups register (EGR) project.

Eurostat's Business Register network, BRnet, can be accessed at the general EU CIRCA address. The access to BRnet is restricted (by userID and password) to persons working with business registers and related areas. The participants of the Wiesbaden Group can sign up on the general CIRCA site and ask for an access to BRnet via the Circa home page or directly from Eurostat.

<http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/Home/main>

The Wiesbaden Group (Roundtable on Business Survey Frames) web site is also maintained by the BR section and includes all the meeting papers as from the beginning 1986. The website is open to everybody, no userID or password needed.

<http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/businesssurvey/info/data/links.htm>

2. Progress and Developments in the Past Year

Annual inquiry

The EU BR annual inquiry 2008 covered 27 Member States, 3 Candidate Countries and 4 EFTA countries.¹ A very similar inquiry has been carried out biennially by the UN/ECE covering their other member countries and (non-EU) OECD countries. Results of the inquiry have been disseminated by email. A summary has been presented in the Working Group on Business registers and Statistical units, which will take place from 30 September to 01 October 2008 in Luxembourg.

EuroGroups register

The EGR consists in multinational enterprise groups (MNEs) and their constituent units and shall enable National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) as well as National Central Banks (NCBs) of the EU and EFTA Countries to harmonise the production of national statistics related to economic globalisation. The main purpose of the EGR is to complement national business registers of NSIs with relevant data on MNEs operating on their territory. After the EGR pilot project (in 2006) covering 600 MNEs, proving the feasibility of the EGR at Eurostat including a confidential data exchange, and the follow-up projects (in 2007) on data acquisition (Bureau van Dijk data with the

¹ The purpose of the annual inquiry is to monitor the compliance with BR Regulation and the quality of the BR.

reference date 31/12/2006) and the IT improvement (amongst others, web application and user interface for Eurostat's end users and administrators) Eurostat initiated in 2008 the acquisition of data from private providers, the establishment of an ESSnet² consisting in 4 NSIs for methodological work and the further IT development. Further details on the EGR will be presented under Session 6c.

New Business Register Regulation and implementation measures

The new BR Regulation (EC) No 177/2008 was entered into force on 25 March 2008. It includes mandatory transmission of individual data on MNEs and their constituent units to Eurostat, and feedback of harmonised information to the EU NSIs and to participating EFTA countries. Data on MNEs will consequently be consolidated at European level and consistent data on ownership and control will be available in each Member State. The first implementing Commission Regulation on the mandatory data exchange on MNEs between Eurostat and the NSIs has been agreed with Member States in the Working Group and in written consultation. It will be voted in the November 2008 Statistical Program Committee and adopted by the European Commission early 2009. An outline of the second implementing Regulation on the voluntary data exchange between Eurostat, European Central Bank (ECB) and NCBs will be discussed at the Business Register Working Group end of September 2008. There are several issues to be clarified, for instance the situation regarding NSI-NCB cooperation at national level.

3. Issues solved, problems and future plans

The future plans are related to the new BR Regulation, the Commission Regulation on data exchange with NSIs and the EGR project. The first complete EGR data processing cycle with NSIs (EGR Version 1.0) will start at the end of 2008. After finalising the acquisition of private data (situation end of 2008) the acquired private data will be integrated into the EGR database. The process comprises the following steps: loading, standardising, linking units at Eurostat and sending out link results resp. preliminary MNEs to NSIs for checking and correcting, NSIs provide Eurostat with completed data as feedback (several iterations). It is planned to provide the NSIs with a first version of the MNE population in spring 2009 to support the definition of survey populations for FATS (Foreign Affiliates Statistics). The first data sets with the final population frame of MNEs should be available mid December 2009.

According to the new BR Regulation the Business Register Recommendations Manual was considerably revised. The most important issues are the (new) characteristics, to agree on their definitions, sources and descriptions, and the treatment of (truncated) enterprise groups and their continuity rules in a consistent way in the EGR and the Recommendations Manual. In July 2008 Member States were asked to give their comments for the updated versions of chapters 1 to 23. The chapters should be finalised by the end of 2008. In addition, the way to proceed with other chapters and the chapters defining the technical specifications for the data exchange between Eurostat and NSIs according to the proposed Commission Regulation will be discussed in the Working Group on Business registers and Statistical units end of September 2008.

Online access to the central EGR is requested by NSIs and NCBs. In the NSIs, both the BR staff and the compilers of statistics ask for such access. There are, however, legal and technical restrictions to this access. The legal ones will be solved incrementally by the Commission Regulations and a planned confidentiality charter. On the technical side online access from outside of Eurostat is currently not possible due to the existing security rules. Internally at Eurostat the best way to arrange the NSI remote online access to the central EGR will be studied, including the potential changes needed for the current Eurostat security rules.

² The ESSnet (Collaborative ESS Networks) concept stems from the need to find synergies and harmonize and disseminate best practices in the European statistical system (ESS). The ESSnet actions shall serve the interests of the whole ESS and should be in line with the 5 year statistical programme of the EU.