

**International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames  
- Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers**

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**France  
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**Country progress report 2008**

## **1. Organisational and population of the BR**

The French statistical office (Insee) is, by law, (decree of 1973), in charge of an unique inter-administrative business register (Sirene): the use of its identification number has been made mandatory for relations between businesses and administrative bodies (Tax administration, Social security, etc...) by government's decree of 1997. The information contained in this inter-administrative register is not legally binding, but its identification number is also used in legal registers.

New registrations (i. e. creations) and updates are transmitted to Insee on a daily basis through so called CFE's (Centres for business Procedures) managed by Chambers of Commerce, of Agriculture, of Handicraft, etc.). According to its status and/or industry, each business is allocated to one CFE, which is able to process its declarations and re-send data to Insee and to each relevant administrative body. There are about 2 million movements per year (creation, updating of various variables, deletion) on the legal and the local units of the inter-administrative BR.

Until now, this inter-administrative BR (Sirene) was the core of the statistical BR. Sirene was designed to be at the same time an identification system and a permanent census of business units; this was obtained by promoting the use of the unique identification number (which succeeded in 1997), improving identification techniques, increasing the number and the quality of variables, in particular by using information from statistical surveys, either through a legal text authorizing such use, when it is considered useful to the public (e. g. Industry codes, size classes etc... or by adding variables the use of which is restricted to statisticians.

Codes are allocated in order to mark out legal or local units of interest for business statistics. Among the 6.5 million legal units of the register, 4 million legal units have an economic interest, most of which may be considered as "enterprise". About 250 people –including specialised teams for agriculture, legal and local units belonging to large enterprise groups, data quality operations – are working on the inter-administrative BR.

Another important part of the French statistical system is the annual survey on financial links between firms (Lifi). This survey allows us to delineate the enterprise groups. This survey interrogates 29 000 firms. It is completed by both public and private sources to enlarge its fields. Finally, around 39 000 groups are delineated among which 420 employ more than 2 000 persons. In total, 8 million people work in the frame of a group and 2 million people work under foreign control. This survey also gives us information on French affiliates abroad

(outward Fats). But it is regrettable that these financial links between firms are managed outside of the business register Sirene.

## **2. Progress and development during the last year**

The reengineering process of the inter-administrative BR is now completely achieved. The BR switched to Nace rev2 at the beginning of the year. Electronic data interchange –mostly in XLM format – is now used for 95 % of data transmitted from CFE's, allowing to process automatically some 60 % of movements: checking if a legal or local unit which is being created is not already registered to avoid double counting, checking new data against those already registered if the declaration corresponds to a modification, checking the consistency and the validity of the declared data, automatic coding of industrial classification. Thanks to dematerialisation of interchange and automation, the load for Sirene management strongly decreased these last year, but we can no longer expect more significant progress by this way. However, we still hope to be more efficient and to improve the quality of the business register by separating its twofold roles (national identification system used in the context of a system of inter-administrative regulations, and central tool for business statistics). That's why it was decided to build a statistical business register as part of the recent overhaul of the annual business statistics (the French program Resane). To conduct this project, a new organisation has been settled at the direction of enterprise at Insee since the beginning of September: the unit in charge of the BR is no longer a separate unit of the direction but is now integrated in a department in charge of annual business statistics. And within this department, two different divisions are in charge of registers: the first one is only in charge of the administrative register the second one will conduct the building and updates of statistical register.

Since 2008, annual statistics of newborn enterprises are published from the BR according to new definitions, consistent with the recommendations for the harmonized collection of business demography statistics by Eurostat.

In terms of groups of enterprise, 2008 was dedicated to the consolidation of actions undertaken during the previous year: the expertise of administrative data on financial links between companies is still going on. The goal is to substitute the administrative source to the survey in 2011 or 2012.

The entry into action of the new European regulation on FATS gave the opportunity to review our answer to the Inward FATS regulation and to coordinate this answer with the SBS's one. The pilot study to test the delivery of variables on international trade for Inward FATS is almost completed and we are about to send the results to Eurostat. In the meanwhile, we started a second study on outward FATS activity.

At last, works on profiling are going on. The negotiations started in 2007 led to the collection of data for one new European group. 4 European groups are now regularly surveyed in the frame of their profiled unit.

## **3. Future plans**

A statistical business register will be built by September 2010. It will be the only reference for statistical purposes, and this will make it a strong consistency between the different statistics (short term and annual statistics). The statistical business register will be constructed from the

inter-administrative register that lists all legal units. It will be managed independently this administrative register, with rules of updates specially tailored to statistical purposes, without legal regulation. For instance, two concepts are used: administrative existence and economic existence. In the business register, the field of business statistic will be delineated. Statistical unit like enterprise or group, economic activity status will be managed. An entirely automatic coding for variable of statistical use and updates will ensure completeness and homogeneity. Updates have to be classified, structured in order to take into account inconsistencies between several sources. The quality will be managed on a statistical way, targeting a population, sampling some units. Such an organization should improve quality and efficiency in managing the statistical business register.

In 2009, the works around groups will be linked with the project of statistical register, since this register will contain statistical based especially on groups of enterprises.

The pilot study on outward FATS will go on. After a first step dedicated to European group's visit in order to build a questionnaire, a survey will be launched which will target all French multinational groups (around 2500). The aim is to produce results to be sent to Eurostat by October 2009.

Moreover, France will take part to the Eurostat works related to the Eurogroup Register (pilot study at the beginning of 2009).