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1. Organisation and Population of the Business Register

The Statistical office in Luxembourg is divided in 4 departments and 18 units. The Business register unit is part of the General affairs department and encompasses 3.5 FTE persons (including the head of the unit).

The main purpose of the business register is to manage, on the one hand, the monthly update of the database containing basic information about economic units (ID, Name, address, activity, turnover, employment,...) and, on the other hand, our monthly survey on economic activities. Furthermore, survey frames (SBS, TIC, CIS Light,...) and enterprise statistics are produced for users inside and outside our office. The business demography data is compiled mainly from the business register.

The business register is updated from existing administrative sources (Register of private and legal persons, Social Security, VAT administration) and by information received from our monthly economic activity survey sent to new legal persons. The information received is used for the NACE (and institutional sector) classification process and the update of links between legal units (enterprise unit). The classification of private persons exercising economic activities (sole proprietorships) is done by using information available from the VAT administration and/or Social Security. Exchange of information with other units in the office (National accounts, SBS, FDI,...) helps to further update the NACE (and institutional sector) classification of units and assess the quality of the enterprise unit.

For the time being, the business register covers three statistical units: legal unit, enterprise and local unit. Economic activities (NACE) are fully covered except for NACE Rev. 2 divisions 01,02, 03 and 84, where coverage is only partial.

2. Progress and Developments in the Past Year

In the past year, the business register unit was fully involved with the implementation of NACE Rev. 2. A national version of NACE Rev. 2 (structure, explanatory notes, correspondence tables) has been developed and published on our website in October 2008 (the printed version will become available by end of the year). Not only the database had to be redesigned to allow the storage of NACELUX Rev. 2 (additional tables and links between variables had to be added), but also the interface used for coding and consulting.

From end of June 2007 on, all new legal units were coded in the old and new version of NACE. This dual coding period will go on for about 5 years. Already existing units had to be recoded in the new version of NACE. From the nearly 170.000 units existing in the business register when the recoding process started about 100.000 could be recoded automatically, the remaining units had to be recoded manually. For the recoding, we used mainly information already existing in our

business register. Additional information has been collected from official publications, commercial authorizations and if necessary by additional survey. No probabilistic methods have been used in the recoding process. The recoding process will normally be finished by end of November 2008.

3. Issues solved, problems and future plans

Due to the implementation of NACE Rev. 2 and the lack of human resources, some other projects had to be postponed. A full derogation for the implementation of the enterprise group unit in the business register has been asked and granted by the European Commission (we were however able to deliver information requested recently by Eurostat for the implementation of the EGR). No existing administrative data can be used for this project. We have to rely on commercial databases (BvD, D&B,...) and information available from FDI and SBS statistics.

Furthermore, the update of the data on local units had been postponed to 2009 (the last update was done in 2005). For this kind of data we cannot rely on already existing administrative sources, but need additional surveys. For the next update, the survey population will probably consist of enterprises with 10 (or 20) or more employees. The scope has yet to be decided (the survey population size will be about 4.000 enterprises in case of a 10 employee threshold). The political need for this kind of data has slightly increased in recent years. A common set of statistics available for external users will be produced.

The VAT administration switched recently to a new system for coding and storage of their data. As a result, the data files received in the past were no longer updated or had changed. New files have been made available, but with a different format, a different structure and sometimes a different content. This led to additional analysis and IT application reprogramming work in order to restore an appropriate monthly update of the business register.

The business register is to become increasingly the heart for all kind of business surveys done by our Statistical office, not only as a sampling frame, but also as a management and control tool. This allows us not only to manage the different enterprise related surveys done by our office, but also to check for the administrative burden caused by surveys. This central system will allow us to identify systematically non-respondent companies. The business register should be in the future the central place where all enterprise related information collected by surveys should be stored. But in the near future (2010) the most important challenge will be a redefinition of the national identification number for enterprises.