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## Session 1: REDUCING RESPONDENT BURDEN

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### Three invited papers

- **Peter Bekx**, European Commission (**Eurostat**):  
The Measurement and Reduction of Statistical Respondent Burden on Businesses: The Current State of Affairs
- **Humberto Jorge Pereira**, Statistics **Portugal**:  
Simplified Business Information (IES) –  
Producing Quality Statistics Based on Administrative Data: A true Possibility?
- **Karmen Hren**, Statistical Office of **Slovenia**:  
Business Statistics with Strong Emphasis on  
Administrative Data Sources - Experience of Slovenia

## Six contributed papers

- **Canada:** The **management** of business response burden at Statistics Canada
- **Sweden:** **Integrated measurement** and control of business respondent burden via business register at Statistics Sweden
- **Switzerland:** Development of a **sample coordination system** for enterprise surveys at the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland
- **France:** **Redesigning** French business statistics: how can the response burden on companies be lessened? (among other objectives)
- **Germany:** A **quality** concept for business statistics
- **Lithuania:** Reduction of respondent burden through the use of new production **techniques**

## Eurostat

- Current state-of-play **in the area of the measurement and reduction** of statistical respondent burden on businesses in the EU
- Following **five main themes** that were addressed at two recent conferences:
  - DGINS, Vilnius, September 2008
  - IAOS, Shanghai, October 2008

## Five main themes

1. **The measurement of burden**
2. Perceived burden is often much more important than the real burden
3. The integration of data collections
4. **The use of administrative data**
5. The trade-off between burden reduction and quality

## 1. Measuring the statistical burden

- **Before the introduction** of any new statistical requirements, there should be **an assessment** of the burden they impose
- **Need for a common methodology** to measure the burden on respondents in all EU Member States
  - Net cost method
  - EU Standard Cost Model
- Burden of statistics on enterprises is **low**

## 4. Use of administrative data

- Possible drawbacks:
  - The **quality** of the statistics
  - The **control** (or lack thereof) by the statistical offices
  - Issues of **confidentiality**
  - Possible **increase in the costs** of data compilation
  - Changes needed in **data processing**
  - New challenges for **human resources** in statistical institutes

## Challenge

- Changing role of statistical offices – from “data-collectors” to “**re-users of data**”
- Their **position against the owners of the administrative sources** has to be reconsidered
- To find the appropriate **way of influence** on possible changes:
  - An appropriate legal framework that establishes the control rights of the NSI; e.g. the need to consult the NSI before changing any of the features of the administrative data

## Questions

- Do you believe that despite the fact that statistics cause only 2% of all burden there is a need **to continue with the measurement** of statistical burden **which could cause excessive burden** on enterprises?
- There are quite a number of **methodological problems** related to various burden measurement exercises that have been done in the EU. Could you tell us a bit more about that?
- While your paper refers to the use of administrative data, you don't mention **other external sources of statistics that could be combined with survey data** in order to alleviate the burden on respondents, such as the direct use of accounting data from businesses or the purchase of commercial data. Is this because you don't believe in these solutions?

## Portugal

- The “Simplified Business Information (IES)” system **set up via Decree-Law**, January 2007
- With the purpose of simplifying and modernising the administration in order **to make life easier for enterprises and citizens**
- **Involvement of all interested parties**, including Statistics Portugal, co-ordinately developed and therefore accepted and acknowledged by all intervening parties

## IES

- Data are supplied electronically, in the same format and **on a single occasion**
- While simultaneously **complying with four legal obligations**
- Is a significant advantage for enterprises, notwithstanding the **initial costs** associated with the need **to adapt their IT systems**

## Single source for NSI

- **Basic statistical data** exhaustively covering Portuguese **enterprises** at disposal
- Mutually **consistent** statistical variables
- **Definitions fully in line with statistical needs**

## Use for statistical purposes

- To **phase out** the annual conduct of the Structural Business Survey; the production of SBS **shortened** by at least 6 months
- Data that were part of the IES should be **used also in any other statistical operation**
  - This has led to the in-house development of a system allowing each statistical operation to use the variables needed from the Data Warehouse specifically created with IES data
- **Quality** of business statistics and international trade statistics was considerably **improved**
- To compare and **validate** data (NA)

## Questions

- In the course of time new or changed data would be required or changed **definitions** should be implemented. Is there foreseen or already in place a system or **procedure to manage such changes of the system**?
- Could you elaborate a little bit more what **consequences** had this shift to use a single source for different statistics **on the internal organisation** of Statistics Portugal?
- To produce statistics on the basis of administrative sources, **the statisticians usually need different and additional knowledge** to cope with the new approach to produce statistics. How was this issue addressed in your office?

## Slovenia

### Legal bases:

- National Statistics Act:
  - Must make use of valid **standards** (e.g. classifications which are national standard, unique **identifications** of persons and businesses)
  - The right to **obtain** individual data from all existing records and the permission to link them
- New regulation on European Statistics

### Administrative sources for economic statistics

- **Business Register**:
  - Framework for the selection of units
- *Statistical Register of Employment*
  - The second-step sampling frame for the majority of statistical surveys dealing with enterprises
  - To estimate employment figures
  - To estimate the non-response
- Annual **accounting** statements
- **Value added tax** declarations

## Reduction of response burden – some evidence

- **Short-term business statistics**
  - VAT declarations for the estimation of turnover
  - Substantial reduction of the response burden – only 5% report also with questionnaire
- **Structural business statistics**
  - Almost entirely rely on annual accounting statements
  - Only the investment survey is conducted
- **National accounts**
  - Annual accounting statements, income tax declarations and VAT declarations are used to estimate approximately 80% of the total value added
- The special **employment survey was eliminated**
- Deletion of questions on the **number of employees** in all branch statistical surveys

## Some weaknesses and challenges

- **Definitions** of variables are not always in line with the statistical definitions, additional statistical surveys are needed
  - Administrative data sources thus cannot fully replace classical statistical surveys
- Statisticians need different and additional **knowledge**
- Undesirable **changes or abolishment** of administrative sources
  - More co-ordination and co-operation with different institutions is needed

## Questions

- The Business Register as an administrative register was initially set up and kept by the Statistical Office and then turned over to the Agency. What was the **main reason for the transmission** of the register?
- Reduction of administrative burden could cause additional statistical burden on enterprises. What could NSIs do in such a situation, what are the **ways in which NSIs could be efficient** in the negotiations with relevant national authorities?
- The administrative data sources **cannot fully replace classical statistical surveys**. Could you explain this statement with some examples?