

## **Improving the business case of Standardized Business Reporting for official statistics: providing tailored statistical information in exchange for standardized company data**

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### ***Abstract***

Like in other countries, Standard Business Reporting (SBR) in the Netherlands standardises the technology for digital reporting to regulatory organisations. In the Netherlands, the use of SBR has increased dramatically because of the obligatory nature of SBR filing of Tax returns, banking applications, and annual accounts. Recognising the potential of standards in digital business reporting, Statistics Netherlands has been an active participant and advocate of SBR since the early start. Although now broadly recognised as the next logical step in statistical reporting, SBR in this regard, is slow in gaining acceptance by the key players. In fact accountants, book keeping firms and developers of administrative software have been steering away from implementation of SBR for statistical reporting. Extensive consultation of a number of those market parties have lead to valuable insights in what factors contribute to this course.

Some key considerations we now know to play an important role are directly related to the business case of the implementation of statistical reporting in the services these players provide. In an effort to make the business case for implementation beneficial, we took some measures to address both the cost side of the equation as well as the revenue side. First of all, the recent development of the Reference Classification System of Financial Information (RCSFI, i.e. a harmonised chart of accounts) has the potential to reduce the mapping effort needed to relate book keeping records to reporting data and hence the considerable costs associated with this effort. If individual companies map their administration to the RCSFI, these RCSFI mappings also provide a link to the SBR reports. As such RCSFI serves as bridge: it increases the degree of chain integration and reduces costs. Second, we made it possible that potentially all companies can send in statistical data based on SBR. This way, an accountant or book keeping firm does not need to select only those companies that happen to be in the statistical sample when sending in company data. Seen from the NSI perspective, this increases the amount of statistical data, allowing much better and more detailed output for e.g. benchmarking data.

On the benefit side of the business case equation we are prototyping a system that provides tailored statistical information to those companies that send in statistical data by SBR. Using our open data based statistical dissemination environment we select and create tailor-made tables concerning, for example, the development of turnover for a specific industry. We then either send back the raw data of this table (so recipients of these data can make their own useful insights for their clients) or provide them with dynamically prepared pdf files. In other words: delivering data for statistical purposes becomes part of a data exchange between companies and the NSI. Both sides have a stake in creating high quality, detailed and ‘fit for use’ results – and hence an incentive occurs for delivering business data on a voluntary basis, without increasing the administrative burden on businesses.

Our plans received encouraging reactions from some important players in the market. Again, it is recognised as an important step forward. Together with the development of the RCSFI it is seen as a possibility to develop standardised key performance indicators and benchmarks for companies in the Netherlands. In the coming months we will be experimenting with an advance group of accountants and software developers to further develop the prototype.

In this presentation we will discuss both our experiences with the development and introduction of the RCSFI in relation to SBR, as well as our latest experiences with tailored statistical reporting. It is a follow-up of a presentation at the 5th International Conference on Establishment Surveys (June 2016, Geneva) where SBR experiences were discussed as the future of business data collection.