

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

For discussion
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Third meeting of the 2006/2007 Bureau  
Geneva, 12-13 February 2007

Item 1c of the Provisional  
Agenda

**IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF BUSINESS STATISTICS**

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1. Various issues could be considered in an in-depth review of business statistics as follows:

**(a) Strategies for a coherent program of business statistics**

2. Country views and experiences could be shared on:

- user needs for business statistics, including as source data for compilation of national accounts;
- the respective role of economic censuses and economic surveys. I note that many countries no longer conduct periodic economic censuses, but have moved to annual and more frequent economy-wide surveys. What are the advantages/disadvantages of the various approaches?
- experiences in use of administrative by-product data (especially business taxation data) as substitute for direct collection of data. What lessons can we learn from best-practice country approaches?

**(b) Statistical units**

3. The *System of National Accounts* continues to refer to producing units (establishments or kind of activity units) and institutional units (legal entities or enterprises). Are these concepts still relevant? Can they be operationalized in countries in a manner consistent with the resources available to the NSO and can businesses report data in respect of these statistical units?

**(c) Contemporary relevance of international statistical manuals**

4. It has been recognized that the international manuals on industrial statistics and production and distribution statistics are well out of date and need updating. What other manuals need updating (e.g. Frascati Manual on Research and Development statistics) or developing (e.g. a manual(s) on services industries statistics)? Are the various “city groups” and other fora focusing on the relevant issues in their deliberations?

**(d) Contemporary best practice in maintenance of business registers**

5. Drawing on the discussions in the International Roundtable on Business Registers, can we identify contemporary best practice in the maintenance of business registers?

**(e) Satisfying user's emerging needs for business statistics**

6. Traditionally, business statistics have been compiled from the perspective of a time series of aggregate statistics, typically classified by industry. There is increasing research interest in business demographics—the birth, growth, merger, death of individual businesses. What distinguishes “successful” businesses from others? Various issues arise in addressing these user interests:

- How should business collections be designed to satisfy these longitudinal perspectives?
- What are the business reporting load implications?
- How can we accommodate user access to data while protecting the confidentiality of individual business data?

**(f) Organization of the work within NSOs**

7. Traditionally, NSOs have organized statistical collection, processing, and dissemination of business statistics along subject matter/industry lines. A number of advanced statistical offices have moved to more functionally specialized organization structures over recent years. What are the pros and cons of alternative approaches? What lessons can be learned?

**(g) Reducing business reporting load**

8. This has been a major issue in most countries over the last decade or so. What approaches have NSOs taken? What lessons can be learned? What trade-offs with user needs have been necessary?

9. In considering the merits of an in-depth review of business statistics, it needs to be recalled that the 2006 United Nations Statistical Commission convened a Friends of the Chair Group to deliberate on “integrated economic statistics.” An in-depth review of business statistics at the 2007 Plenary Session of the Conference would provide very relevant and timely input into the Friends deliberations.

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