UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

UNECE Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection – Towards a New Normal?

26 to 28 October 2022, Rome, Italy

Session 2

19 September 2022

Building a portal together with the business, for the business

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Abstract

Following CBS's new vision on collecting data from businesses, CBS started with the development of the Businessportal. The new vision focuses on reducing the (perceived) response burden by working on smarter ways to collect data and improve services for businesses. The Businessportal is one of the first products to be developed that will contribute to these goals.

What will the Businessportal mean for respondents? Of course it's a safe environment to share data. Next to that we will make it possible to see upcoming surveys so there won't be any surprises. Together with our contact center, we are also working on a better service and an easier way to get answers to possible questions. Because identify the company ofter login, we can also share relevant statistical information about the industry and environment in a dashboard. All together in one web-based portal.

The development is currently underway and is being done based on previous consultations with companies. In 2023, we will again work together with companies to gather feedback and ensure an even better final product. We want to share the product and take you on a journey on how to build a portal for the business, together with the business.

to 2022 UNECE Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection 'Towards a New Normal?' Rome, Italy
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subject Building a portal together with the business, for the business
date September 14th 2022

Background

Communicating with businesses and continuously working on a better response rate may feel like a natural struggle for national statistic institutes. From a business perspective: you're obliged by law to participate in surveys which results in less time spending on your business. And next to that, the purpose isn't always clear. On the other hand are national statistic institutes trying to explain the purpose and aiming to reduce the response burden.

Statistics Netherlands is facing this same challenge as many other national statistic institutes. And next to that there's an obligation by law to put effort into reducing the response burden. Despite the fact that there were several project and initiatives working to solve the same problem of (experienced) response burden, there was a vital piece missing. There was no long-term plan which guided these initiatives and projects and made sure that they were all facing in the same direction. That's when Statistics Netherlands decided to write down this ambition in a position paper and form a committee to create a broadly supported vision on the primary data collection from businesses.

The combination of the new vision and the possibilities given by our new IT-landscape created a 'perfect storm' to start with a long cherished project within Statistics Netherlands: the development of a central portal for businesses. One central (online) place where business can login to and find an overview of their surveys, see relevant information and connect easily with Statistics Netherlands.

New vision on primary data collection from businesses

According to the new vision, Statistics Netherlands aims to realize its information needs from businesses in a manner that is predictable and self-evident from the perspective of the business. The new vision is based on the following three pillars:

1. **Businesses first**: a shift in perspective, whereby the entire data collection process is designed and implemented from the perspective of the business.
2. **Self-evident**: Statistics Netherlands is transparent and predictable in what businesses can expect from us.
3. **Reuse of data:** data will be retrieved from business systems automatically and in a timely manner by Statistics Netherlands with minimal interference from the business.

One of the first deliverables within this new vision will be the Businessportal. The established vision gives guidance for the development. As well for the features that we work on, as for the process and way of working during the development.

What will the Businessportal provide for businesses?

Let's first look at the features of the Businessportal. During the preliminary stage some of the early initiators of the Businessportalreached out to some companies and other end-users of our surveys. Together with them, they formed a list of features that would be highly appreciated if we could implement these into one portal:

1. **Survey overview**
   At the moment, businesses receive e-mails or letters each time they are obliged to fill in a survey. Like this, it's difficult to make a planning for the future as e-mails and letters gets lost. This means we need to send reminders or businesses need to contact Statistics Netherlands for new credential – if they remember they're invited. It's also centered around the survey. Following the new vision we want to put the business first and give them the opportunity to login by themselves and show transparency about what we expect.

2. **Contact with CBS**
   Unfortunately, there will always be questions. The Businessportal makes it possible to give a lot of answers on the majority of the question at one central place. Next to that, if businesses need to reach out to Statistics Netherlands we can prefill their reference number (after login) so there's no extra verification needed at our customer service.

3. **Company information**
   At Statistics Netherlands we work closely with the chamber of commerce. A lot of information about business we base on the information provided from their database. This information could be outdated which can cause errors when taking samples for surveys. The Businessportal makes it possible to be transparent about this information and gives the opportunity to request a change when the information is wrong.

4. **Relevant statistics**
   The question we hear a lot from business is: 'Why do I have to fill out this survey'? We learned that the purpose often isn't clear. And we must take a critical look at ourselves as we don't manage to deliver relevant information back. The Businessportal will contain a dashboard with relevant information based on their industry and articles based on the surveys businesses participated in.

How will we achieve this?

To start a project like this it helps tremendously when there's a broadly shared vision approved by the organization where you can hold on to. So there we had our starting point. And if you want to put the business first – as agreed in the new vision – you need to involve them in an early stage. As you can read in the chapter above, we did ask before starting to develop what they were missing and where we need to focus on. That helped giving us a first direction which was enough to form a team and start off.

Together with the team we started to work on our own mission, vision and mission statement. Of course based on the overall new vision. Working on this together with the team was a perfect way to start the project together and to create a common perception

on the why and how of the Businessportal. Underneath you can find the overview of our mission statement, mission and vision.

Mission Statement	Within 2 years we build an **appealing portal for businesses.**
Mission	We will achieve this by - Focusing on **easy and accessible** communication with and data collection by Statistics Netherlands - Creating a **safe and reliable** environment - Presenting **relevant** statistics back to businesses - Being **clear and transparent** about the expectations
Vision	*By this we foresee a future with an decreased experienced response burden*

To maintain the connection with business, Statistics Netherlands chose to develop the Businessportal with an agile mindset. This basically means that we aim to deliver new features fast and ask feedback from stakeholders (including of course businesses) so we can work together on adding value to the product.

The agile way of working does not ask for a long-term planning like Statistics Netherland is used to with other projects. However we did work out a global overview on what we plan to do. Only in the first year (2022) we know where to work on bases on the earlier talks with stakeholders. We will use the next year (2023) to include stakeholders and use their feedback as the input for our work. And that's exactly why a planning on features isn't possible as we simply don't know what the feedback will be.