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The Catchword

Access panel pilot study

The increasing reluctance of respondents to participate in surveys and to provide information, the growing need to conduct surveys as probability samples, and a steadily growing demand for statistical information are three major challenges for the household and person-related surveys of official statistics. Establishing an access panel of households ready to respond to surveys may provide a solution in this situation: Under the access panel concept, it is intended that households leaving the microcensus after the fourth survey wave should be recruited for regular participation in voluntary surveys of official statistics. Such households "ready for responding" would constitute the access panel and would be available for random sampling. The general compliance of households to co-operate with official statistics would permit to achieve relatively high response rates. At the same time, it would be possible to react more flexibly than in the past to new data demand.

The opportunities of using such an access panel are currently being examined by the Federal Statistical Office in co-operation with five Land statistical offices in a large-scale pilot study entitled "pilot access panel", which will be finished in autumn 2003. Aims of the pilot study include

- testing four different recruiting methods,
- analysing the extent to which households are ready to participate in surveys and to provide information,
- examining the feasibility of implementation and maintenance of the access panel (especially for drawing stratified random samples and for comparing the response rates among test surveys with different response burdens),
- developing first weighting models,
- developing and implementing a concept for an EDP-based solution, as well as
- preparing a cost estimation.

Comprehensive results from the pilot study are meanwhile available (cf. Körner, Thomas and Anja Nimmergut: *Zu den Möglichkeiten der Umsetzung einer Dauerstichprobe befragungsbereiter Haushalte in der amtlichen Statistik. Ergebnisse einer Pilotstudie*, in: *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, no. 05/2003, pp. 391-401; for a presentation of the concept of an access panel cf. Bechtold, Sabine, Anja Müller and Olga Pötzsch: *Ein Access-Panel als Auswahlgrundlage für Haushalts- und Personenerhebungen ohne Auskunftspflicht*, in: *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, no. 05/2002, pp. 345-358). Without anticipating the final report, the available results of the pilot study allow to conclude that an access panel is not only feasible but has also considerable potential to respond to the above mentioned challenges. This paper roughly summarises some main results of the pilot study which suggest that an access panel would provide important benefits for official statistics.

Participation behaviour

The participation rates of households leaving the microcensus were considerably higher than expected (up to 26%). This result suggests that it is possible to establish an access panel sufficiently large for conducting surveys such as EU-SILC, the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions to be produced from 2005. Assuming a participation behaviour similar to that of the pilot study, about 13,600 households could be recruited every year for a regular access panel.

The pilot study has also shown that the socio-economic characteristics of the participants in the access panel corresponded largely to the relevant distributions of the microcensus. Groups underrepresented in the pilot study, as generally in voluntary population surveys, are wage earners and single parents. Estimations based on the pilot study distributions indicate, however, that already

after a first recruitment wave, all strata in a proportional sample allocation are well occupied by households of the access panel.

The experience acquired in the test surveys based on the pilot access panel demonstrates that significantly higher response rates can be obtained in an access panel (compared to conventional methods of sample recruitment).

Random sampling

Considerable congruence with the microcensus is a prerequisite for high-precision random sampling. At the same time, an access panel requires less expenses than comparable probability sampling methods. From a methodological point of view, a random sample is clearly superior to a quota sample, even if the latter is easier to implement in terms of practical organisation, which is the reason why it was often applied in the past. Due to this qualitative advantage, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) increasingly requires random sampling in drafts of new legal acts.

The feasibility of drawing samples from the access panel was tested in several surveys as part of the pilot study: First, in the test surveys in the context of implementing EU-SILC (2002) and, second, in both waves of the European pilot study on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in households (ICT 2002 and ICT 2003). Experience acquired in the test surveys has shown that samples can rapidly and without problems be drawn in practice, being much more rapid and less resource consuming than comparable methods of sample recruitment such as the random route method.

Flexibility towards new data demand

During the pilot study, it was confirmed that there is an undeniable demand for an access panel. Currently the two most important examples are the implementation of the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in Germany and the future European statistics on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in households (ICT). Feeding those surveys from an access panel was tested already in the pilot study and proved to be highly beneficial. Conducting the two surveys on the basis of conventional (random) sampling methods would presumably involve considerable more effort, so that it would hardly be possible to meet the specified deadlines. Other applications are surveys based on Art. 7 of the Federal Statistics Law (such as the time use survey) and ad hoc surveys either on the level of the Federation or on the regional level. Finally, with an access panel official statistics would be in a position to react much more flexibly and efficiently to short-term data demand of, for example, supreme federal authorities. Possible subject areas include current developments in the fields of labour market and employment, mobility, and specific aspects of internet use, such as in the context of e-government.

According to the test of the recruiting methods the participation rates obtained permit to establish an access panel sufficiently large to cover surveys of that kind, without running the risk of overburdening households.

The project team will finish the pilot study by autumn 2003 and submit the project report to the Heads of the Federal Statistical Office and the statistical offices of the Länder. The remaining activities include studies on panel attrition, on the effects of repeated participation in surveys and on the expected costs of the access panel.

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Methods of federal statistics – Further development

Consumer price index on base 2000 - Major changes of the 2003 index revision

The consumer price index for all households in Germany will be called *consumer price index for Germany* in the future. Giving a new name has however not involved any content-related modification.

Introducing the new price base 2000 at the same time means that indices are no longer calculated for specific types of households. That decision has been overdue as the definitions of the different types of households were so narrow that they no longer corresponded to real life. Besides, long-term comparisons of the index series showed almost no difference.

The above change has an effect on a large number of contracts which include stable-value clauses that are related to one of the indices no longer calculated. Therefore, the statistical offices provide detailed information regarding the change-over to the *consumer price index for Germany*. The Federal Statistical Office provides among other things an interactive program at www.destatis.de/wsk which facilitates an independent adjustment of payments for existing stable-value clauses. In addition, a special telephone hotline has been opened to answer questions about this issue ((+49-611) 75-3777).

More than one decade after German re-unification, the 2003 index revision introduces a unified weighting pattern for Germany as a whole. The consumption patterns have become largely alike and, for some years now, the consumer price indices have – with the exception of some short-term deviations - shown almost identical trends. Moreover, the data basis no longer allows a reliable calculation of different weights for the former territory of the Federal Republic and for the new Länder. However, a regional breakdown of the consumer price index by the old and the new Länder and the Land of Berlin will continue to be available.

The differences in the income level between the individual Länder, which are rather considerable, are considered in the consumer price index on base 2000 in the following way: The weight used in aggregating the Länder results to obtain a federal result is the Länder share in private consumption and not, as previously, the number of inhabitants.

In the course of any index revision, the reporting units selected (e.g. shops) are reviewed and, if required, adjusted to changed market conditions. At the same time, the survey catalogue, i.e. the list of goods and services included in the collection of prices, is updated. This is necessary because the consumption patterns and the goods offered change with time. As experience has shown, revising the basket of goods and services at five-year intervals is sufficient since the consumption patterns of all households on average change comparatively slowly. If required, however, adjustments can be made in between such systematic updating in the context of revisions. They may consist in, for instance, the modification of goods descriptions, the incorporation of new goods or the replacement of reporting units. Having in view a pure price comparison, changes of the described type are however restricted to urgent cases.

The 2003 index revision includes some methodological changes, too, which consist mainly in an extension of coverage and improvement of practical survey aspects.

An aspect incorporated for the first time is social protection, which stands for social security services such as the accommodation of elderly people in old peoples' homes, home care services or Meals on Wheels. The importance of those expenditure items has considerably increased in the past few years - a development to which the co-payments of households have contributed largely. The consumer price index only covers expenditure which is to be borne by households themselves. In accordance with the relevant definitions, public assistance or statutory long-term care or health insurance payments are not taken into account. The bank services for households previously included in the consumer price index were exclusively services for fixed remuneration. These were in particular fees for keeping the usual wage and salary accounts. In the past few years, however, the importance of charges which are expressed as a percentage of a transaction value has markedly increased. Examples are safe custody

charges or charges for buying and selling securities. To consider the increased level of importance of those "prices" in consumption, such charges have been included in the index calculation as well.

Minor methodological changes as they are typical for any revision of that kind will not be discussed in detail. However, the change made in covering package tours, holiday homes, flights and the like is to be mentioned here. It could happen in the past that journeys during the Christmas holidays were not included in the index for December due to the calendar day situation. After the survey has been modified in this respect, it is now ensured that the seasonal highlights of Christmas and the New Year holiday are always covered in the December index. This will change the seasonal of price development and, consequently, the monthly rates of change in particular for December and January.

As is always done in the context of such revisions of consumer price statistics, all results for the period starting with the new price base year – which in this case is January 2000 – have been recalculated. This allows to compare the results on base 2000 = 100 with the results on base 1995 = 100 calculated so far. The revision differences resulting from the new weighting pattern and the methodological changes will be subject to an in-depth analysis by the Federal Statistical Office with the aim to isolate the effects of the individual items under revision. Publications on those issues have been planned. The Federal Statistical Office offers long-time series for the consumer price index from 1991. As usual, the results for the period before January 2000 are raised by simple rebasing to the level of the index series 2000 = 100. The results for the years 1991 to 1999 are however not recalculated on the basis of altered weights or changed methods.

In the context of the 2003 index revision, the Federal Statistical Office includes additional and special items of breakdown in its consumer price index publications. This refers in particular to *seasonal goods and services* and to *energy*. In this way, it will be easier for the users of statistics to make their own analyses (elimination of particularly volatile areas).

Basically, the above-mentioned changes in the consumer price index have an impact on the harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP) for Germany as well. This applies especially to the changed formula for aggregating Länder results to obtain a federal result and to the updated weighting pattern and basket of goods and services. An exception is the treatment of social protection. The HICP has included all major components of social protection since 2001. The German consumer price index has so far not considered any of the social protection services. As a result of the present revision, social protection is completely covered now. The content-related differences between the HICP and the CPI have thus become smaller. Coverage as regards social protection has become identical from 2001 as a result of the change-over to base year 2000. As for 2000, the CPI covers social protection completely, while the HICP includes it only in part (crèches and the like).

The calculation of the retail prices index (RPI) is also based on the consumer price statistics. Hence, the new formula for aggregating the Länder results to obtain a federal result and the updated basket of goods and services have an effect on that index, too. The weighting pattern for the RPI has also been updated. However, other methodological changes (such as the inclusion of social protection, the incorporation of bank services depending on transactions, and changes in covering package tours and the like) do not have any influence on the RPI since those services are not part of the RPI's coverage. The RPI's scope has been modified slightly. The overall index now includes retail trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles and filling stations. That change in the RPI is in line with an adjustment made in the Classification of Economic Activities. However, all results calculated so far will continue to be available.

A comprehensive paper on the revision as such which describes the details of both the methodological changes and the analysis of revision-related differences will be published by the Federal Statistical Office in one of the next issues of its journal "Wirtschaft und Statistik" (Economy and Statistics).

The updated weighting pattern is available at the Office's website at www.destatis.de/tehme/d/thm_preise.htm. Methodological explanations regarding the general approach to the weighting pattern computation are included in a paper published in vol.3/1999 of the journal "Wirtschaft und Statistik" (Economy and Statistics).

The interactive program designed to facilitate an independent calculation of threshold values in the context of the consumer price index for existing stable-value clauses can be accessed at www.destatis.de/wsk.

The current results of the consumer price statistics can be accessed either via the Office's fax retrieval service +49 (0) 611 / 75 38 88 or the answering machine service +49 (0) 611 / 75 28 88.

More detailed information is available from the consumer price statistics information service +49 (0) 611 / 75 47 77.

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CHINTEX Final Conference on "Harmonisation of Surveys and Data Quality"

At the Final Conference of the CHINTEX project (The Change from Input Harmonisation to Ex-post Harmonisation in National Samples of the European Community Household Panel – Implications on Data Quality) held at the Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden on 26 and 27 May 2003, the research consortium presented the project results. The project consortium consists of the Federal Statistical Office (Wiesbaden), the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University (Frankfurt), the German Institute for Economic Research (Berlin), Statistics Finland (Helsinki), the Centre d'Études de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Économiques - CEPS (Differdange) and the University of Essex (Colchester). Several speakers and invited discussants – experts from European official statistics and statistical academics - presented the results of their activities.

Chintex is an English-language research project supported by the European Commission. It deals with issues of harmonisation and quality of sample surveys in social statistics, focusing on the European Community Household Panel (ECHP).

An important aspect is examining in how far the results of a rather new panel comprising just a few waves can be compared with those of an ongoing panel and, consequently, whether replacement is possible. The research project touches upon subject areas that are of general scientific interest and concern the general quality of statistical results obtained by means of panel data.

Quality of income data

Research on data quality provided evidence that changes in earned income tend to be underestimated by questionnaire information. The attrition bias has a similar effect. For Finland it was shown by means of register data that changes in household income and earned income, as well as changes in the marital status have an impact on the attrition behaviour. There is a bias towards an underestimation of mobility in household income and measures of inequality. All biases found are in accordance with the hypothesis that changes increase the risk of attrition.

Comparative analysis across countries does not seem to be disturbed by panel attrition: the ranking of the countries regarding their income distribution measures does not change very much. While there are differences in attrition patterns, the research suggested that unless they were very extreme, they were unlikely to affect the substantive conclusions of models.

Impact of data collection methods

In the ECHP and also later in the EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) some countries use income data from surveys while others with national registers use information from registers. A comparison between estimates based on Finnish survey information and estimates based on Finnish register information for the same persons revealed substantial differences in the distribution of household equivalence income. These differences are stable over time. With respect to the poverty rate, a key measure for cross-country comparisons, the deviation amounts to a relative error of about 50 percent. Such large deviations have an impact on the ranking of the European countries according to ECHP results and will also have some impact on the forthcoming EU-SILC. The reasons for these distributional differences lie in a substantial overestimation of the earned gross income by the survey records in the lower deciles and a moderate underestimation of income in the upper income deciles. The balance of undercoverage and neglecting income-related expenses may be negative for low incomes and positive for high incomes.

A very clear-cut result of work on non-response is that field work in the national ECHP subsamples differs considerably. Specifically, the contact process in the ECHP-UK is quite different from that in all other countries. This is due to differences in the data collection process. In particular, in the ECHP-UK the usual follow-up rules are not applied and consequently the contact rates are much lower, the workload per interviewer is much heavier and the average duration of the interviews is much shorter. Therefore we conclude that the impact of the data collection and the population characteristics on the sample participation varies between different countries and between different types of surveys. It is

clear that there are significant differences in attrition and item non-response patterns in different surveys carried out in the same country. However it is also clear that there are substantial variations between countries in attrition levels. The research also suggests that there are issues of good survey practice which will minimise attrition and item non-response. Here we focused on maintaining the same interviewers across waves.

In an interviewer based panel, like the ECHP, residential mobility and interviewer change due to the field organisation are the most important risk factors for attrition.

Panel effects

On average, over the duration of a panel, there is a trend towards more precise levels of measurement. Therefore the quality of income data increases during the panel.

The comparison between new panels and ongoing ones also showed that the cumulative losses in case numbers due to panel attrition in the ECHP are substantial, that is about 20 percent within 5 waves. Here ongoing panels, such as the BHPS (British Household Panel Study) and the German SOEP (Socio-Economic Panel), were more successful in preserving its sample size than was the new ECHP over the same period.

The nonresponse bias at the initial wave of the Finnish ECHP is larger than the attrition bias over all other waves. This makes us assume that initial nonresponse bias and attrition bias have opposite directions and compensate each other over the long term.

There are some hints in the analysis that the attrition behaviour changes with the duration of the panel. A possible cause for such a tendency in the participation behaviour might arise from a growing co-operation with the interviewer or the survey as such.

We see that cross-sectional surveys, and to a smaller extent short term panels, suffer from a maximum measurement error and a maximum nonresponse bias. Both components are reduced to some extent by a longer operation of the panel. These results support panels with a long duration. 65 experts from 18 countries participated in the conference. The event was hosted by the Federal Statistical Office, coordinating the project.

Further information on the project and on the final conference is available at <http://www.destatis.de/chintex/index.htm>

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Workshop on "Anonymising microdata of economic statistics"

Is it possible to make official statistical data on local units and enterprises available to the scientific community, that is in an anonymised form ensuring sufficient data protection and, at the same time, safeguarding the potential for data analysis? This issue, which is highly interesting also in terms of science policy, was the focus of a workshop held by the Institute for Applied Economic Research, Tübingen (IAW) in co-operation with the statistical offices at the University of Tübingen on 20 and 21 March 2003.

At the two-day event, about 60 experts from the academic community, empirical economic research, and official statistics discussed provisional results of a research project carried out by the statistical offices and supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Passing on de-facto anonymised microdata – i.e. individual data whose re-identification would involve unreasonable efforts – to the scientific community has become common practice in the area of household and person-related data. However, de-facto anonymised microdata from local unit or enterprise surveys of official statistics have so far not been available in Germany.

Two goals must be achieved by de-facto anonymisation: First, sufficient protection of individual data must be ensured and, second, a maximum of analytical potential of the anonymised data must be maintained.

From the viewpoint of future users of microdata, the second aspect is most important. There would be no point in producing effectively anonymised data that are useless for science. The scientific community is strongly involved in all phases of the project: The Institute for Applied Economic Research is a project partner of the statistical offices. Professor Dr. Gerd Ronning, who has a chair in statistics and econometrics at the Faculty of Economics at Tübingen university and is the Director of the IAW.

The workshop in Tübingen, too, focused on the requirements the scientific community thinks microdata should meet. Thus the close contact with future users is intensified, which has been maintained already in the course of the project. During the two days, the current state of the project was presented to a large group of users who, in turn, provided useful views on how to continue the project.

On the first day, the focus was on anonymisation methods. Scenarios of how unauthorised de-anonymisation might be attempted were presented and the availability and quality of additional knowledge as well as the technical possibilities of using it for de-anonymisation attempts were examined. An overview was given on the state of the art of anonymisation methods, presenting the methods available and informing about the methods considered as suitable for the project work. The paper dealing with concepts of effective protection and potential for analysis illustrated the close connection between the project activities and international research on anonymisation.

The second day focused on data use. The interaction between anonymisation methods and data use in econometric models was examined, as were the possibilities of taking account of, and compensating for data changes resulting from anonymisation by applying suitable analysis methods. The presentation of panel analysis applications that are interesting in terms of economics underlined the importance of anonymising longitudinal data, which is also planned for a later stage of the project. Finally, first evaluations were presented, comparing anonymised material with original data. Such activities will be continued under the project in the course of 2003.

The participants in the workshop were experts, whose scientific exchange of opinions gives considerable impetus to the further project activities. One of the project focuses in 2003 will be the examination of further test anonymisations. The papers contributed to the workshop will soon be published by the Federal Statistical Office as volume 42 of the publication series "Forum of Federal Statistics".

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The new double-entry accounting system of municipalities and its impact on public finance statistics

Reforming the budgetary law of the municipalities towards a double-entry accounting system (or towards cameralistics enlarged by a "partial resources consumption concept") will enter a critical phase in the coming months. The guiding texts for the new budgetary law, together with the drafts of the classification of the new accounting system (framework of accounts, product plan), will be submitted for adoption to the Standing Conference of the Ministers and Senators of the Interior of the Länder.

The goal of the reform is an output-oriented control of the administration, presenting the resources consumed for the provision of services. The reform towards a double-entry accounting system will allow increased use of commercial planning and controlling tools in municipal administrations.

Public finance statistics gives a picture of the entire public budget management in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is thus the basis both for decision-making in numerous political areas and for the general government account in national accounting. Its reliability ensures the smooth functioning and the legal security of the systems of horizontal and vertical equalisation and distribution of revenue of public budgets in Germany. Its legal basis - the law on public finance and personnel statistics - refers to the municipal budgetary classifications adopted by the Ministries of the Interior and forming the basis of the survey programme of public finance statistics. Thanks to the numerous advantages provided by the double-entry accounting system for statistical reporting on public budgetary management, the statistical offices are optimistic that public finance statistics can cope with the difficult task of fundamentally reforming its reporting system in the coming years (cf. MAD 3/2001). At their spring conference, the heads of the Federal Statistical Office and the statistical offices of the Länder confirmed that the system of public finance statistics based on double-entry accounting can work smoothly only if classifications are set up in a binding and nationwide uniform manner for the collection of data according to categories in terms of economics/finance management (framework of accounts) and functions (product plan). In the reform process, the task of public finance statistics is to develop new classifications in co-operation with representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, the principal municipal associations and the model municipalities.

Framework of accounts

In commercial accounting, the system of covering assets and debt as well as expenditure and receipts is the framework of accounts. To obtain a picture of the financial situation corresponding to reality, "integrated financial accounting" is planned in addition for the municipal framework of accounts. It is similar to cash flow accounting as used in commercial businesses, however further developed for municipal purposes and fully integrated in the accounting system. That enlarged framework of accounts combines the advantages of double-entry accounting with those of cameralistic accounting.

For public finance statistics, financial accounting is the indispensable interface between the cameralistic system of classification by object and the double-entry framework of accounts. There is a 1:1 relation between the two systems. Data from cameralistic and double-entry budgets can be combined in public finance statistics, which is necessary during the facultative period of changing over to double-entry accounting.

As two classes of accounts are occupied by financial accounting, applying a decimal structure, there is less space available for the income and asset/liability accounts than in ordinary frameworks of accounts. Budgetary law concepts in the reform projects of the Land Ministers of the Interior have led to slightly differing frameworks of accounts with different weights of the income and asset/liability accounts. According to the current state of discussion, two versions of the framework of accounts - with the same content and slight differences in the account structure - will be submitted to the Standing Conference of Ministers of the Interior.

Both versions fully meet the current requirements of public finance statistics and those of the accounting system regarding the consolidation of core administrations with facilities separated out

and the assessment of the budgetary situation. Their identical content is the basis for setting up a new statistics. If the Land Ministers of the Interior adopt those frameworks of accounts for budget management, the important identity of budget management and statistics will be maintained, which will ensure also in the future good-quality and low-burden collection of statistical data on public finance. Should some Länder, for conceptual reasons, deviate from the common framework of accounts in individual items, the Ministries of the Interior of the Länder concerned will have to ensure that the required conversions (concentration) to the uniform statistical collection pattern are performed.

Framework of products

The functional character of the structural classification of municipality budgets allows to monitor the expenditures made by municipalities for individual tasks and their possible coverage. In the new accounting system, the functional structure will be replaced by a nationwide uniform framework of products that is independent of the type of accounting.

A product is a service or a group of services provided by municipality administration. Several products are a product group, which are combined to form product areas. The product group level is the breakdown required for public finance statistics, national accounts, and major special statistics (for the statistics of social benefits, it is recommended that, according to the current situation, the municipalities apply a more detailed breakdown to the accounting system). Payments, expenditures/revenue and costs/benefits may be collected statistically from the accounting system.

Procedures

As the new municipal budget draft classifications will now be presented, public finance statistics faces the following tasks:

1. During a transition period, which so far has not been limited, the results of cameralistic and double-entry budget management will have to be combined. Financial accounting in the new accounting system ensures the compatibility of the accounting types. From the view of public finance statistics, it would be urgently required to reduce the transition period.
2. It must be ensured that the agreed frameworks of accounts and products are actually adopted in the Land legislative procedures. It is necessary to develop new collection and evaluation programmes and data editing patterns.
3. Changing over to a new double-entry statistics of municipal public finance is being prepared. It has to be checked whether changing over to double-entry statistics can be enhanced where the entire accounting system within a Land changes over to the new system.
4. The Federation and the Länder are only at the beginning of the reform process. With a view to uniform presentation of public budgets in public finance statistics and in national accounting, such reforms should be co-ordinated with the reforms taking place at the municipality level.
5. Statistics on the assets of the public sector are being prepared. The EU legal bases for a statistics of financial assets are being developed. In its basic structures, the new double-entry accounting system of the municipalities will meet such requirements, thus minimising statistical efforts at the municipality level.

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Events

Scientific conference on online surveys

Since 1995, the Federal Statistical Office has organised joint scientific conferences at two-year intervals together with the Association of German Market and Social Research Institutes (ADM) and the Working Party of Social Science Institutes (ASI). This year's fifth joint conference held on 26 and 27 June 2003 dealt with the issue of online surveys and was moderated by Dr. Manfred Ehling from the Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden.

After the participants were welcomed by the President of the Federal Statistical Office, Johann Hahlen, an introduction to the topic was given by Dr. Manfred Ehling.

The first set of topics consisted of three summary papers that provided information on the state of affairs regarding online surveys in academic social research (Dr. Ulf-Dietrich Reips, University of Zürich), in commercial market research (Hartmut Scheffler, TNS EMNID, Bielefeld) and in official statistics (Dr. Thomas Pricking, Land Office for Data Processing and Statistics of North Rhine-Westphalia, Düsseldorf).

Following the summary papers, Erich Wiegand from the Association of German Market and Social Research Institutes (ADM) explained the quality standards and professional rules applying to web-based data collection. Dr. Wolfgang Bandilla from the Centre for Survey Research and Methodology in Mannheim (ZUMA) presented the Internet community as a population. In the same thematic context, Christiane Heckel from BIK Aschpurwis + Behrens GmbH in Hamburg delivered a paper on sampling in online surveys, which concluded the first day of the event.

The second day started with papers by Frank E. Zander and Thomas Lanninger from Ipsos Access Panels GmbH in Hamburg informing about the possibilities of using access panels as a basis for online surveys. Dr. Michael Bosnjak from the University of Mannheim used a variety of examples to illustrate the methodological possibilities, current issues, and possible extensions of online questionnaire studies. The possibilities of multimedia applications in online surveys were presented by Dr. Raimund Wildner from the GfK AG in Nuremberg by means of selected examples. The conference was concluded by a paper held by Dr. Frank Knapp from Psyma Online Research GmbH in Rückersdorf, informing about online data collection beyond surveys, such as logfile analyses regarding online behaviour monitoring.

A volume containing all the contributions presented at this scientific conference has been published in German language only by the Informationszentrum Sozialwissenschaften (email: iz@bonn.iz-soz.de) as volume No. 7 of their publication series "Sozialwissenschaftliche Tagungsberichte".

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Calendar of events

European Conference on Quality and Methodology in Official Statistics (Q2004) in Mainz from 24-26 May 2004

From 24 to 26 May 2004, the Federal Statistical Office will hold the European Conference on Quality and Methodology in Official Statistics (Q2004) in the *Kurfürstliches Schloss* in Mainz. The event supported by Eurostat will be the first in a series of biennial European conferences on issues of quality and methodology of official statistics. The goal is to create a regular forum for methodological issues and new developments in European official statistics. The event builds on the positive experience of the International Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Q2001) held in Stockholm in 2001.

About 400 participants, mainly from Europe and North America, are expected for Q2004. The issues of the conference will embrace all quality-related aspects of official statistics. Topics will encompass not only the processes of official statistics production but also issues of measuring statistics quality and quality management. The first day of the conference will also include a total of four half-day courses and one full-day course on important quality-related issues. The conference language will be English.

The content of the conference will be prepared by a programme committee consisting of experts from a total of seven National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat as well as two university experts. The event will be chaired jointly by Eurostat and the Federal Statistical Office. What will also be presented at the conference is the results of the European project DACSEIS (Data Quality in Complex Surveys within the New European Information Society).

The deadline for submitting conference papers is 30 November 2003. Further information on the conference and the call for papers are available at <http://q2004.destatis.de> or from the programme committee co-chairmen, Werner Grünewald (tel. +3 52 / 43 01 / 33 28 0; werner.gruenewald@cec.eu.int) and Thomas Körner (tel. +49 (0) 611 / 75 44 13; thomas.koerner@destatis.de).