

METHODS – APPROACHES – DEVELOPMENTS

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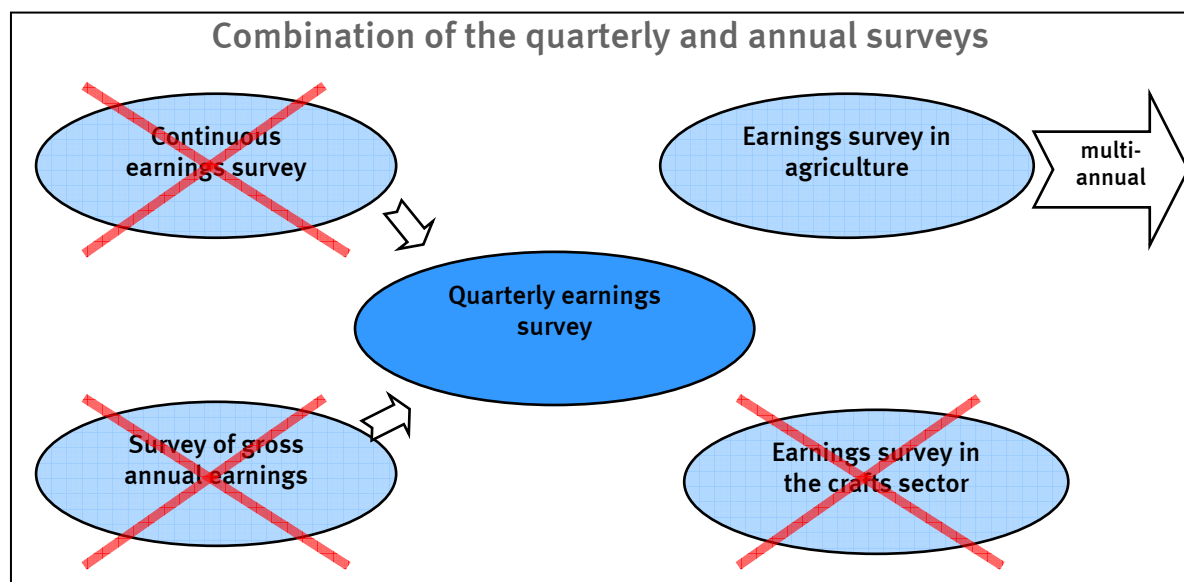
The catchword

The new Earnings Statistics Law – core element of the reform of the system of pay statistics

Reducing the burden on businesses and modernising the supply of statistical data are central objectives of the statistical offices of the Federation and the Länder. To achieve these goals, a number of projects have been initiated, which also include a reform of the system of pay statistics. The basis for this reform has been provided by the new Earnings Statistics Law. Other important elements are a stronger inclusion of existing data sources and the nationwide introduction of "eSTATISTIK.core", a tool for automated data extraction from business accounting systems, for all surveys of earnings and labour costs.

On **1 January 2007**, the new **Earnings Statistics Law** (Law on Statistics of Earnings and Labour Costs) **entered into force**. It replaced the former Wage and Salary Statistics Law, which had been in effect in almost unchanged form since 1951 and was no longer suitable to meet today's information needs. It mainly failed to cover data on earnings in the services sector and of part-time employees. In contrast, data were collected which had lost their importance. The new Earnings Statistics Law permits to adjust the supply of information to the requirements of modern social and labour market policies and to reduce the response burden imposed on businesses.

The new Earnings Statistics Law entails the following **changes in the primary surveys**: A new quarterly earnings survey has replaced the former continuous survey of wages and salaries in the industry, wholesale and retail trade and financial intermediation. The compulsory survey of gross annual earnings, which covered 40 500 local units, and the compulsory survey of earnings in the crafts sector, covering 27 000 local units, were discontinued at the end of the reference year 2006. The earnings survey in agriculture will no longer be taken annually but only every four years, with the next one being scheduled for 2010. Data on agreed earnings will be provided for the interim years. The structure of earnings survey and the labour cost survey have been adjusted to the respective EU regulations.



Since the beginning of 2007, the **quarterly earnings survey** has replaced the former continuous survey of earnings in the industry, wholesale and retail trade, and financial intermediation. Based on an unchanged sample size, the quarterly earnings survey includes almost all areas of the services sector. The survey collects data for the whole quarter and not only, as before, for one month per quarter. The distinction between wage earners and commercial or technical salaried

employees is no longer applied, and a less detailed breakdown by performance groups is used. In exchange, the quarterly earnings survey covers the previously excluded part-time employees. In addition, data on hours worked are collected for all employees, not only on wage earners, and extra payments are included. The quarterly results are used to calculate annual figures, so that the **survey of gross annual earnings** is no longer required.

The variables covered by the **quarterly earnings survey** have been coordinated with the items included in the businesses' payroll accounting systems. This is the groundwork for **eStatistik.core**: In coordination with the statistical offices, software producers program statistics modules for an automated extraction of data from the electronic accounting systems of businesses. Using these statistics modules, the data required for a specific set of statistics can be compiled by "pushing a button" and can be transmitted via the internet to a common data reception point of the statistical offices. Without the need to switch media, the data can then be further processed up to the point of publication. At the beginning of 2007, ready-to-use statistics modules for the quarterly earnings survey were already available from some software producers. Other software manufacturers are still working on additional statistics modules for this survey. The systematic coordination with the items covered by the payroll accounting systems enables responding businesses which have no pre-fabricated modules available to automate data aggregation on their own. The information required for the quarterly earnings survey can also be supplied using an online questionnaire (**IDEV – Internet data collection within the coordinated system of the statistical offices**).

The **first** results of the new quarterly earnings survey were released in July 2007: Henceforth, quarterly information can be provided on earnings and hours worked in almost all sectors of the economy (NACE Rev. 1, C - O excluding L, i.e. not including agriculture, hunting and forestry, fishing, public administration, private households and extra-territorial organisations). This is a substantial improvement in the range of data supplied on earnings and labour costs for purposes like monetary and short-term economic policies, decisions related to collective bargaining and wages policy, or for calculating the labour cost index. A significant extension has also been achieved in the range of earnings data available to meet the strong demand for information concerning comparative earnings, compensation for occupational injury, ground rents and the like.

For the purpose of the new **structure of earnings survey**, the provisions of the Earnings Statistics Law have been adjusted to the corresponding EU regulations (Council Regulation (EC) No 530/1999 of 9 March 1999 concerning Structural Statistics on Earnings and on Labour Costs and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1916/2000 of 8 September 2000). The survey concept mostly corresponds to that of the former survey of the salary and wage structure. The survey collects personal data on the employees, on their earnings and on the major pay-influencing variables at four-year intervals. The distinction between wage earners and salaried employees has been abandoned and the number of variables covered has declined by about a fourth as compared to the former survey of the salary and wage structure. The new structure of earnings survey is currently being conducted for the reference year 2006, collecting data for the first time on almost all economic sectors (NACE Rev. 1, C - O, excluding L). For this survey, too, statistics modules for eStatistik.core are available, which are well used, according to current information. The results of the structure of earnings survey will help to examine questions concerning low earnings, gender inequalities in earnings, earnings in various professions, and the distribution of earnings across various economic sectors. The results of the 2006 structure of earnings survey are planned to be released in the second half of 2008.

The Earnings Statistics Law also regulates the **labour cost survey** in accordance with the relevant EU regulations (Council Regulation (EC) No 530/1999 of 9 March 1999 concerning Structural Statistics on Earnings and on Labour Costs and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1726/1999 of 27 July 1999). This survey collects total data every four years and depicts the labour costs and hours

worked in enterprises and local units in almost all sectors of the economy (NACE Rev. 1, C – O excluding L). The survey focuses on those costs which are not part of gross earnings such as the employers' social contributions. The amount and composition of the total costs involved with the production factor of labour are of significant importance for assessing competition at national and international level as well as for labour market and social policies. Based on the EU regulations, internationally comparable labour costs data were already published for 2004. As compared to the former labour cost surveys, the distinction between wage earners and salaried employees has been abandoned, which reduces the volume of data collected in the industry by half. Apart from that, data from other sources are integrated and calculations are made where possible to disburden the respondents as far as possible. (See the German-language article: *Günther, R. / Wagner, I., Neukonzeption der Arbeitskostenerhebung*, in *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, No 10/2006, pp. 1068 ff.)

If we look at the **overall effect** of all changes, we can see that, compared to the former Wage and Salary Statistics Law, the new Earnings Statistics Law greatly reduces the burden imposed on businesses. Nevertheless, it permits to represent earnings and labour costs in a much more complete manner than before. Also, consistent statistical data are available which make it possible to carry out more informative analyses than before. However, the new Earnings Statistics Law has not been the last step in the process of reforming the system of pay statistics. To complete the statistical picture of earnings and labour costs, for instance, in the field of public administration, it is necessary to process data from other existing sources and to incorporate them into the overall system.

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Methods of federal statistics – Further development

Taxes on products and subsidies on products in national accounting

Ever since the domestic product has been calculated according to the European System of Accounts (ESA) 1995, taxes on products and subsidies on products have explicitly been taken into account as adjusting items. The balance between taxes on products and subsidies on products is referred to as net taxes on products. Under the production approach, these items are of primary relevance in calculating gross value added (GVA) at basic prices. To this end, taxes on products included in the prices that can be obtained on the market, i.e. in the output at market prices, have to be deducted from these prices, while any received subsidies on products must be added. Unlike taxes on products, subsidies on products thus are part of gross value added. To compute the gross domestic product at market prices, the net taxes on products are then added in one part to GVA. This is the way how valuation differences between the production approach and the expenditure approach are levelled out.

Taxes on products

Taxes on products are defined in the ESA 1995 as taxes that are payable per unit of some good or service produced or transacted. The tax may be a specific amount of money per unit of quantity of a good or service, or it may be calculated ad valorem as a specified percentage of the price per unit or value of the goods and services produced or transacted. As a general principle, taxes in fact assessed on a product, irrespective of which institutional unit pays the tax, are to be included in taxes on products, unless specifically included in another heading.

Taxes on products are divided into non-deductible value added type taxes (that part of value added tax that cannot be deducted within the scope of input tax deduction from the value added

tax invoiced), taxes and duties on imports excluding VAT as well as taxes on products, except VAT and import taxes. Value added tax comprises value added tax paid to the general government and value added tax paid to the EU. Taxes and duties on imports excluding VAT comprise excise duties on imports, customs duties on imports as well as levies and monetary compensatory amounts. Taxes on products, except VAT and import taxes, include consumption taxes related to domestic production, EU levies (milk and cereals co-responsibility levies, sugar production levy) as well as entertainment tax, insurance tax, fire protection tax, real property transfer tax and betting and lottery tax.

Taxes on products at current prices have to be divided into a price component and a volume component to make it possible, for instance, to calculate the price-adjusted gross domestic product. As a matter of principle, a distinction is made between per-item taxes and ad-valorem taxes. The typical per-item taxes are excise duties like those on mineral oil, electricity, coffee, sparkling wine, spirits, sherry, port and similar beverages, alcopops and beer. The taxes on products in "real terms" are calculated by multiplying the quantity of the taxable product by the amount of tax to be paid per unit of the taxable product (basic tax rate) in the base year or in the previous year (if calculated at previous year's prices). If a tax is levied as a percentage of the value of a product it is referred to as an ad-valorem tax, such as value added tax and insurance tax. Tobacco tax which is also included among excise duties comprises a price-related and a quantity-related component. These components have been fixed such that the tax calculated for each cigarette or each kilogramme of fine-cut tobacco will not drop below a set amount.

In the case of an ad-valorem tax, the price-adjusted tax is calculated by applying the tax rate of the base year (or previous year) to the value of the taxable products in terms of base year prices (or previous year's prices). The implicit tax deflators in that case denote changes in the tax rate, changes in the composition of the assessment basis, and (for ad-valorem taxes) price changes in the assessment basis. The increase in value added tax at the beginning of 2007 resulted in a substantially higher cash revenue and, due to the addition of subsidies on products, led to a rise in the nominal gross domestic product. By means of the price adjustment, however, the impact of the higher tax rate is eliminated so that the price-adjusted gross domestic product is not directly affected, but only reflects "genuine" quantity-related reactions.

Information about taxes on products is obtained from the tax returns supplied by the Federal Ministry of Finance concerning joint taxes and taxes that accrue either to the Federation or the Länder (federal or Länder taxes exclusively). Information on exclusively municipal taxes is available from the public finance statistics, while the taxes paid to the European Union are determined using the balance-of-payments statistics compiled by the Deutsche Bundesbank. In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 2516/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 November 2000 that governs the recording of taxes and social contributions, the cash receipts are recorded applying phase delays where they are necessary for individual types of tax. The phase delays depend, on principle, on the deadlines specified in the relevant tax laws for paying the taxes. Accordingly, value added tax paid to the general government, insurance tax and tobacco tax are phase-delayed by one month. Taxes on products that are phase-delayed by two months comprise, for instance, mineral-oil tax, spirits tax and coffee tax. That proportion of value added tax that accrues to the Federation and is paid to the European Union mainly consists of monthly downpayments and clearing payments that are not related to the turnover achieved in the respective (prior) months. Therefore, it is not really possible to phase-delay these amounts.

Taxes on products are mainly generated in the industry (e.g. mineral-oil tax, tobacco tax, electricity tax and spirits tax), by providers of business services (insurance tax, real property transfer tax) and by providers of personal services (betting and lottery tax). In 2005, taxes on products totalled EUR 225.0 billion, of which EUR 6.7 billion were paid to the EU. Accounting for almost EUR 140 billion, value added tax was the most important among taxes on products.

Mineral-oil tax ranked second with about EUR 40 billion, followed by tobacco tax with more than EUR 14 billion.

Subsidies on products

According to the ESA 1995, subsidies in national accounts are current unrequited payments which general government or the institutions of the European Union make to resident producers, with the objective of influencing their levels of production, their prices or the remuneration of the factors of production. Subsidies on products may consist in a specific amount of money per unit of quantity of a good or service, or may be calculated ad valorem as a specified percentage of the price per unit.

A conceptual distinction is made between import subsidies and other subsidies on products. Import subsidies, however, are of no relevance in Germany at present. Other subsidies on products include subsidies on products produced and used domestically, payments covering the losses of government intervention organisations (the intervention organisation in Germany is the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food), subsidies to public corporations and quasi-corporations (compensation for persistent losses which they incur on their productive activities) and direct subsidies on exports payable to resident producers (e.g. for beef). The subsidies on exports provide compensation for price differences if the EU price is higher than that on the world market. They are intended to ensure the competitiveness of EU agricultural products on the markets of third countries.

Subsidies on products are financial assistance granted by different levels of the general government. Information on these subsidies is provided by accounting results of the federal budget where subsidies of the Federation (central government) are concerned and by accounting results of public finance statistics for subsidies granted by the Länder and municipalities. Information on subsidies on products from the European Union is derived from accounting results contained in Annex E "Apportionment of funds and market regulation expenditure of the EU", which is attached to chapter 1004 "Market regulation, emergency prevention measures" of the federal budget. These subsidies are not recorded as general government revenue, but as direct payments by the rest of the world to other domestic sectors.

In accordance with the payment concept, subsidies on products are allocated in national accounts to the sectors receiving them, i.e. the possibility that they may ultimately be passed on to other beneficiaries is left out of account. At present, subsidies on products are recorded for agriculture, the food industry, wholesale trade and inland transport.

In 2005, subsidies on products totalled EUR 6.5 billion. This included EUR 0.6 billion of subsidies paid by the EU mainly for exports of vegetable or animal products. With almost EUR 6 billion of compensatory payments for lower transport prices for pupils/apprentices and for trips of severely disabled persons, short-distance public transport received the bulk of subsidies on products. Looking at the total of subsidies as defined in national accounts, which amounted to EUR 32.9 billion in 2005, subsidies on products accounted for about a fifth.

In parallel to the nominal figures, price-adjusted values have to be calculated for subsidies on products as well. This is done in a way similar to the one described for taxes on products.

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Online procedure for the use of Federal Employment Agency data on persons employed

New arrangements for the provision of data

Since 1975 there has been close cooperation between the bodies of official statistics and the Federal Employment Agency regarding the statistics on persons in employment, with work being shared. According to an agreement concluded with the Federal Employment Agency on 6 December 1975, the Federal Statistical Office is supplied for free, among others, with a large amount of anonymised microdata on employees subject to social insurance compiled through the integrated reporting procedure for social insurance. These data are checked, processed and evaluated at the Federal Statistical Office to be made available to a large community of users in aggregated form.

In connection with a reform of the registering procedure effective as of 1 January 1999, the Federal Employment Agency set up a data warehouse (DWH) with the help of which large amounts of data from all the labour market statistics processed at the Federal Employment Agency can be stored, managed and supplied flexibly and rapidly in consolidated form for evaluation purposes. In March 2007, the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Statistical Office agreed in a contract to reform the transmission of data from the statistics on employees. Now the Federal Statistical Office has online access to the DWH of the Federal Employment Agency. This is an important precondition for a cost-effective and efficient use of administrative data for official statistics employing modern IT procedures.

Advantages of online access to Federal Employment Agency data bases

Based on reporting to social insurance, the Federal Employment Agency centrally stores data in the DWH on employees fully subject to social insurance and marginal part-time workers in the form of smallest aggregates in an object-oriented, multidimensional database of the MOLAP System (**M**ultidimensional **O**nline **A**nalytical **P**rocessing) from reference date 30 June 1999, which are updated quarterly. The MOLAP System is an analytical information system and particularly suited for evaluating large amounts of data. By way of coded and certified access via the Internet, the Federal Statistical Office can produce quarterly and annual results from four data cuboids with a structure by place of work and place of residence and by size classes of local units and commuters. Several users may access the data stocks jointly to evaluate them.

With the uniform data base checked by the Federal Employment Agency and the use of powerful software for analysis and evaluation (Business Objects), the preconditions were created for producing consistent results. The structured data base and a comfortable graphic evaluation surface make it possible to evaluate the very extensive data material of the statistics of employees for several reporting days in a rapid, universal, and flexible manner.

The response time for a simple inquiry covering several quarters is 5 to 10 seconds since under MOLAP the data are stored physically in the file system in a quickly accessible form. A storage mechanism is used which was specially optimised for the pre-calculation, storage and retrieval of multidimensional data. This technical system for the first time enables ad-hoc evaluations of the statistics of employees. It had not been possible to evaluate the material (some 27 million data records) with comparable speed by means of the IT procedures used at the Federal Statistical Office.

The variables of the statistics of employees are stored as dimensions and their values as elements. In addition to single evaluations which are possible, attributes (aggregations of breakdowns, e.g. age groups) are formed for most of the values of the variables which can be retrieved while being linked with the data. Within a data cuboid, all variables (dimensions) and aggregations may be combined with each other and retrieved individually. The analysis of the

data base is supported by functions such as “drill up” and “drill down“ – the change to higher and lower hierarchies. The results can be exported to Excel rapidly and without problems.

With the software for analysis and evaluation used (Business Objects), an application program is provided to users which makes it easy to realise also complex retrievals from the statistics of employees without IT knowledge. It is not necessary to undergo several days of training. One-day workshops were held at the statistical offices of the Länder to introduce this system on a test basis. The evaluation software was geared to the requirements of statistics production by the Federal Employment Agency. The software version used from summer 2007 enables data output in Excel format and among others also the edition of data in text format without size limitations.

Changeover to the online procedure

After testing the efficiency, functionality and handling of the MOLAP system in three test phases, it was decided to replace the complicated, time-consuming and partly heterogeneous evaluation of microdata material by the new procedure step by step. As results from the statistics of employees are used in numerous statistical sets of accounts and publications, a transition period of several months has been scheduled for the complete replacement of the old procedures and the changeover to the new one.

After the changeover to the online procedure has been completed, the present cost-intensive checking, correction, processing, storage and mailing of the microdata material at the Federal Statistical Office and the maintenance of the coordinated programs and formats will no longer be necessary. For internal purposes such as backcasts for the employment accounts of national accounting, the microdata material of reference date 30 June will be processed once a year with a reduced programme. The Federal Statistical Office will also receive data on local units with persons employed subject to social insurance contributions from the Federal Employment Agency once a year for implementing confidentiality procedures. The licence fees to be paid in the online procedure for the use and maintenance of the analysis and evaluation software are borne by the Federal Statistical Office.

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New possibilities to evaluate the 2003 sample survey of income and expenditure by means of person-related extrapolation

Every five years, households in Germany are asked about their incomes and expenditures, the formation of wealth, equipment with consumer durables and the housing situation as part of the sample survey of income and expenditure. After surveys had been conducted in 1962/63, 1969, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993 and 1998, the sample survey of income and expenditure took place for the ninth time in 2003.

The sample survey of income and expenditure is a quota sample including up to 0.2% of all households, i.e. about one household out of five hundred is covered. Only households willing to provide the information asked for in the survey documents form part of the sample.

Until the 1998 sample survey of income and expenditure, data were extrapolated and results presented in the publications only on household level. Analyses at the level of individuals were possible only to a limited extent with the extrapolation factors determined for households. Results relating to the income distribution of households and individuals were published for the first time for the 1993 sample survey of income and expenditure. Number 6 of Subject-Matter Series 15 (“EVS 1993” - Sample survey of income and expenditure, 1993) contains both data on

the income distribution of households by income classes and information on how many persons earn which types of income.

With the data of the 1998 sample survey of income and expenditure, more extensive distribution analyses were made on the basis of net equivalence incomes. In Number 6 of Subject-Matter Series 15 ("EVS 1998" - Sample survey of income and expenditure, 1998) results were published on the distribution of income-poor and income-rich households and those in a situation of precarious wealth.

To be able to supply internationally comparable results on the distribution of income, poverty (in monetary terms) and social exclusion of the population in Germany, a person-related extrapolation was made for the first time with the 2003 sample survey of income and expenditure. First the extrapolation factors from the simple expansion of households were transferred to the data of individuals. Then there was a further adjustment to data of individuals from the 2003 microcensus. Data records with the data of individuals were produced from the information in the housekeeping books, which contain extensive socio-economic information and detailed data on the receipts of individuals and the expenditure of households.

Using internationally acknowledged calculation methods (net equivalence income, OECD weighting scales), the data of individuals were evaluated for an analysis of the income distribution of the population in Germany.

Results are presented in the form of distribution quantiles, Lorenz curve, Gini coefficient and Laeken indicators in Number 6 of Subject-Matter Series 15 ("EVS 2003" - Sample survey of income and expenditure, 2003). The issue also contains more detailed information on the expansion and may be obtained from the Statistics Shop of the Federal Statistical Office as a free download (pdf version).

Compared with the household data, this material containing person-related extrapolation factors offers other new possibilities of evaluation in addition to the traditional distribution calculations because household variables, socio-demographic and socio-economic variables as well as the receipts of persons, net equivalence income and household expenditure are contained as variables. The Federal Statistical office may be entrusted with undertaking special evaluations.

Additionally, the Federal Statistical Office makes the data of individuals available to scientists as Scientific Use Files.

The basis of these anonymised data of individuals is the existing 98% basic file containing the information from the housekeeping books. In the description on the website of the Federal Statistical Office (for the address see below) that is basic file EVS2003_HB from which the data records of individuals were produced by adding the respective extrapolation factors for individuals.

The terms of delivery and the fees to be paid for the new Scientific Use Files are identical with the corresponding delivery terms for all other Scientific Use Files of the sample survey of income and expenditure. They are explained in detail on the website of the Federal Statistical Office at <http://www.destatis.de/>.

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Microdata surveys in European education systems

Background

Preparations are underway in Germany to reorganise official school statistics on the basis of microdata. Afterwards, the relevant data will no longer be collected using survey forms with pre-defined tables, but the statistical offices will receive sets of microdata for each pupil. The collection of microdata has recently been introduced throughout Germany for vocational training statistics and statistics on children's and youth welfare, while higher education statistics have provided microdata since the mid-1990s.

The Standing Conference of Land Ministers of Education has taken a resolution that the reorganisation should be completed by the reference year 2008. In fact, the individual Länder have made different arrangements for that reorganisation. Though agreement has been reached on a core data set, opinions differ as to the time and implementation features of the reorganisation (concerning, for instance, the inclusion of private schools and the introduction of a pupil identification number). Against this background, the Federal Statistical Office gathered information on international practices concerning education statistics – especially on the collection and analysis of microdata. This information was presented at a workshop of the Standing Conference of Land Ministers of Education (KMK) on "Data collection strategies for education statistics", which was held in Berlin on 13 February 2007.

The compilation is based on an unofficial survey among selected members of the Technical Group of the OECD Education Indicators Programme. The following countries have been included: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Poland, Israel and Canada.

Availability of microdata in the countries under comparison

Almost all of the countries compared have gained some experience - at least for specific levels of education - with the collection of microdata on persons undergoing education. Microdata that are based on a complete count are usually only available for the regular education system. For the sphere of continuing education, most countries only have information available from sample surveys. The collection of microdata is most widespread in the area of higher education, somewhat less frequent for secondary schools and not very widespread for pre-primary and primary education. Table 1 provides a broad overview of data availability. It should be noted however that the collection of microdata has partly not proceeded beyond the planning stage or is still being set up.

Table 1: Availability of microdata in the countries under comparison, by levels of education

Level of education	Foreign countries	Germany
Pre-primary education	Austria, Denmark, Israel, Netherlands, Switzerland	Statistics on children's and youth welfare since 2006
Primary education	Austria, Denmark, Israel, Netherlands, Switzerland	Introduction planned
Secondary schools	All countries under comparison except for Poland, Spain and Canada	Introduction planned
Vocational training in enterprises	Austria, Denmark, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland	Vocational training statistics since 2007
Higher education	All countries under comparison except for Poland	Higher education statistics since 1994

In a number of countries, the collection of microdata has started only recently. This is due, among other reasons, to the fact that the collection of microdata is greatly facilitated by electronic student administration systems in educational institutions. In principle it means that an excerpt of a pupil's record is sufficient to furnish the information for the statistics.

In most of the countries under comparison, the microdata collected contain a permanent personal identification number or the introduction of such a code number is planned. As a rule, this identification number already exists for other purposes (such as population register numbers or social security numbers) and is anonymised when the data are stored. The identification number permits to link the data records for several reference years. The microdata collected in Germany so far do not include identification numbers. With respect to school statistics, there is some discussion about whether and how such an identification number could be introduced in the light of the existing data protection rules.

Experiences gained by the countries under comparison on microdata

The countries that have already introduced microdata-based statistics in general reported positive experiences, notwithstanding a few technical problems during the reorganisation stage. In all countries under comparison the data are aggregated at national level, though they are partly collected at regional level (provided that the collection of microdata has already been introduced throughout the country).

It must be taken into account that the creation of the legal bases and the coordination with data protection rules may take a lot of time. As a matter of principle, rules must be established to define the reporting channel and to determine who has access to what data. The distinction between data used for administrative purposes and statistical data plays a particularly important role in this context. The different arrangements made in the countries under comparison are mirrored, for instance, by the data flows from public educational institutions to statistics. In Austria, the data are first transmitted by the public educational institutions to the education ministry, which then passes on an excerpt to the statistical office. In the Netherlands, the educational institutions deliver the data to an independent administrative agency, which then compiles different data sets for the education ministry and the statistical office. One feature that is common to all countries is that the statistical data cannot be used for administrative purposes (unless there is a legal basis to this effect).

In all countries under comparison, the introduction of microdata surveys has resulted in an improvement of data quality. This is most likely due to the fact that the student administration systems, from which the data are extracted, also provide the educational institutions with internal planning information and are therefore kept up-to-date and correct. Another important aspect is that the costs are lower for both the educational institutions (which only have to copy a data record instead of completing a large set of tables) and the statistical offices.

Microdata containing identification numbers provide the basis for calculating highly informative indicators for educational policies. At the same time, they enable a variety of analyses to be carried out, for instance, about transition processes within the education system. Owing to their potential for flexible data processing, microdata offer advantages over aggregated data in pre-defined tables even if they do not contain identification numbers.

Further information

If you are interested in the documentation on the workshop "Data collection strategies for education statistics" convened in Berlin on 13 February 2007, please refer to the website of the Standing Conference of Land Ministers of Education at <http://www.kmk.org/aktuell/home.htm>.

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New ways of supplementing the data base on births and childlessness

1. Background

Presently there only are approximate estimates in Germany on the sequence of births¹ and lifelong childlessness. Analyses based on the official birth statistics are limited in so far as data on the sequence of births is obtained only from married women and only for the existing marriage. Consequently it is unknown how many unmarried or no longer married women give birth for the first time. In the case of divorced or widowed women who marry again, children from the previous marriage are not considered in the sequence of births. This data gap is becoming more serious as the share of illegitimate births increases (in the new Länder it already amounts to more than 60%) and the number of second, third etc. marriages grows.

The statistics of births also provides information only on a few variables relating to mothers², which limits the analysis of relations between the socio-economic background of the women and their fertility.

Although the microcensus covers numerous variables such as educational attainment, occupational group or income, its data exclusively relate to the children living in the household at the time of the survey. Other children of the woman who do not or no longer live in the household are not considered. Children living in the household are not distinguished by their being children of the responding woman by birth or not. Consequently, all estimations of the number of children and of childlessness based on the microcensus are subject to this not irrelevant restriction.

2. Survey for special purposes “Births in Germany“

To improve the data situation, the bodies of official statistics in autumn 2006 conducted a survey of women on the basis of Art. 7 Para. 2 of the Federal Statistics Law. The aim was to determine representative estimators for the final number of children per woman, the age at which they gave birth for the first time and the share of childless women in the short run and at low cost, and to create a basis of microdata for socio-demographic analyses.

The survey addressed the female participants of the continuous sample survey of households ready to provide information (DSP) who had been between the age of 16 and 75 on 1 September 2006. The survey is an access panel of official statistics. Households who leave the microcensus after the fourth and last wave and are willing to continue participating in non-obligatory statistical enquiries are recruited for that purpose. With the permission of these households and their members, address data and microcensus data of the latest microcensus are stored in a data base. The DSP contains annually updated identifiers of households and persons which are identical with the corresponding microcensus variables³ as regards their values.

At the time of the survey, data of about 15 000 women aged 16 to 75 years were stored in the DSP. For the distributions of the variables such as age, marital status, educational attainments and vocational qualifications there was good agreement with the microcensus. To achieve a high degree of coverage for the individual cohorts, all participants of the DSP being of relevant age were included in the survey.

As the person and household-related core information of respondents was known from the DSP, the enquiry could be aimed at recording necessary but missing information on the present or

¹ The sequence of births results from the number of children a woman has given birth to before the present birth.

² The following variables relating to the mother are shown in the statistics of births: age, citizenship, legal status (married/not married), employment (employed/not employed at the time of birth), religious affiliation, place of residence.

³ For more details on the DSP see Körner, T./Nimmergut, A./Nökel, J./Roloff, S.: “Die Dauerstichprobe befragungsbereiter Haushalte“ (The continuous sample survey of households ready to provide information) in *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 5/2006, p. 451 et seq.

final number of children, birth sequence, age of the woman at the time her children were born, partnership, etc.¹ The socio-economic background variables were afterwards taken from the DSP and integrated into the data records of the persons surveyed.

Some 12 600 women participated in the postal survey. All relevant age groups between 16 and 75 and women without children were sufficiently represented by the participants. The participation rate of 84% was extraordinarily high even for an access panel, which generally contains persons ready to respond. The following factors may be the reason for that:

- The topic was familiar to the respondents and seemed up-to-date and important to them.
- The questionnaires were short and not difficult to complete.
- The survey material was informative and comprehensible.
- The readiness to participate in a survey of individuals may be higher than with a household survey on a comparable subject and of comparable scope. However, the survey on "Births in Germany" so far is the only survey of individuals based on the DSP, therefore no safe statements can be made on the subject yet.

3. Outlook

The survey on "Births in Germany" provides a data basis linking detailed information on births with socio-economic data of the women. The extrapolated results for Germany, the former territory of the Federal Republic, and the new Länder will be published in autumn 2007.

At the same time, the bodies of official statistics strive for a revision of legal regulations which is to guarantee a permanent improvement of the data basis on births and childlessness. If the Bundestag decides in favour of the revision, from 2008 women aged 15 to 75 years will be asked to indicate the "number of live-born children" in the microcensus at intervals of four years. The Law on the statistics of population change and the current adjustment of the population is to be modified so that from 1 January 2008 the information on the sequence of births will refer to all children of a woman and not only the children born into the present marriage.

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Web services for integrating the central data bases into production and publication processes and for statistical data exchange

As a medium for data exchange between the administration, business and citizens, the Internet has already achieved much. The eGovernment initiative of the Federation entitled "BundOnline 2005" in Germany successfully completed phase one with several hundred services being online. By means of the government programme "Future-Oriented Administration through Innovation", the Internet is to become the preferred channel of communication and distribution for administrative services in line with demand. The largest efficiency potentials have to be tapped at the interface between business and administration by linking their process chains electronically.

The Federal Statistical Office is very closely connected with new and innovative IT technologies. The production and dissemination of data is one of the core competences of the Office. For

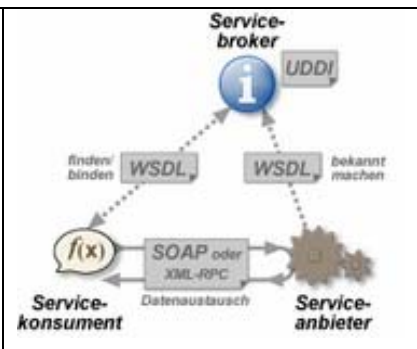
¹ For more information on the list of variables please refer to Pöttsch, O.: "Neue Datenquelle zu Geburten und Kinderlosigkeit" (New source of data on births and childlessness) in *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 3/2007.

several years, data have been disseminated through the web mainly via the homepage, the Statistics Shop and GENESIS Online.

Since the early 2000s there have been specifications and first implementations enabling the automated handling of services and transactions via the Internet. They are called web services. What is exchanged is not the html documents common on the Internet but documents in xml format. Through the platform-independent standards used, web services are able to decode remote method calls of whatever platform and pass them on to an application. Thus a distributed architecture emerges.

These standards were implemented by several software suppliers, among them also open source providers. Processing of the results delivered is possible in Microsoft Office XP and 2003, OpenOffice 2.0 and of course individual applications (Java, Perl, ...) .

Generally client programs send requests to a web service, which answers by providing the required information. Therefore many say that web services are for computers what websites are for people. Although this statement describes only part of the web services facilities, it is quite fitting. Web services are not intended for human users but for software systems which exchange data automatically and/or call functions on remote computers.



An essential advantage of service oriented architectures (SOA) is that complete applications may be created on the user side (consumers) which come into existence through the networking of individual distributed services. The term “distributed” means that any services of any operators (exposers) are linked at whatever location to form a system (composer). On the consumer side, the system looks like a homogeneous, closed system. It is not revealed to the user of the system that loosely connected components are working in the background. The consumer/composer may select services offered only on the basis of their functionality. On account of the data exchange standards, it does not matter what is behind. A disadvantage is the dependence on the exposer’s operational readiness.

The statistical information system GENESIS already offers central storage of data and metadata, search and tabulation functions. This means that GENESIS fulfils important tasks a modern statistical institute has to cope with. Many statistical processes require data and metadata and can but profit from a central system with a standardised interface.

GENESIS Online is an Internet interface enabling people to prepare tables in the dialogue mode, export data and search for metadata.

With “GENESIS Web Services“ an infrastructure was created to offer the functions available in GENESIS Online also for automated processing.

For customers who have used GENESIS Online frequently and/or process the data obtained automatically, rapid access to statistical data is provided requiring only that the interface is programmed once and minimising the regular workload involved if not reducing it to zero.

In addition to enhancing the user comfort for external users of GENESIS Online, the Web Services offer a great potential for integrating the functionality and data stocks of GENESIS into internal products and production processes.

GENESIS is a metadata system and as such supports the filing of metadata and their relations. It has been stored, for instance, which variables were covered by a statistics and what its legal

bases are. These metadata are of decisive importance for internal use in many instances and for online customers. Therefore data may be obtained from GENESIS via the Web Service. Tables can be produced and retrieved dynamically from the central GENESIS data stock. Cuboids of data, metadata and pre-defined tables can be made available for use by any user. If required, the retrievals may be adjusted, for example by a selection based on time or subject-matter criteria.

Web services are a modern technology which easily and efficiently supports the integration into processes. It would therefore be a good idea to integrate GENESIS Web Services efficiently and reliably into process chains of administration and business.

GENESIS Web Services offer search and tabulation interfaces. Access to metadata is possible; tables can be individualised and retrieved. Some partners in enterprises and administration and specialised users at the Office have profited from the new access channel since mid-2006.

Recent developments at Eurostat aim at effecting data deliveries of EU national statistical institutes to Eurostat by means of web services. The Federal Statistical Office is involved in the prototypical production process of Eurostat with the central data base GENESIS and the GENESIS Web Services.

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Methodology handbook of the producer price index for industrial products (domestic sales) – now online

Background

From 5 to 20 July 2005, a delegation of the Statistics Division of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visited the Federal Statistical Office under its ROSC project. On that occasion the IMF assessed the extent to which selected statistics are in line with international standards. Among the statistics examined was the statistics of producer prices for industrial products.

As a result of the inspections, the IMF made a number of recommendations as to how the German statistics of producer prices could tap improvement potentials both with regard to methodology and organisation. One of the recommendations was to improve the methodology notes offered on producer price statistics: “For the PPI develop and publish more detailed and more complete metadata that fully articulate information on index concepts, data sources, statistical techniques, compilation procedures, etc., to support the needs of more specialized users.”

Bases

In response to that recommendation, Division VA developed a methodology handbook of the producer price index for industrial products (domestic sales), which is now available online on the homepage of the Federal Statistical Office. In 13 chapters, the book describes the bases and methods of producer price statistics with the aim to present the essential aspects of determining the index in Germany. It explains both how all the calculation bases are prepared in the event of rebasing and what steps of work have to be performed every month.

The index of producer prices for industrial products (domestic sales) is determined monthly by the Federal Statistical Office. It measures the price changes of industrial products sold in the country by domestic enterprises of mining and quarrying, manufacturing, energy and water supply. To do so, prices are obtained from various enterprises and then aggregated in several steps with the help of fixed weights.

By this new publication, the background of index calculation and the preceding work are presented in clear form. Interested users of the statistics are supplied with the information necessary to simplify the use and interpretation of results. It addresses both users of the statistics from the spheres of politics and business, associations, the general public and the enterprises reporting price data, whose cooperation is of vital importance for implementation.

Structure

The structure of the methodology handbook is based on the “Producer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice¹” edited by the IMF, with the focus of the handbook being on practical aspects. In the first chapters it gives basic information on the background and the use of the index, on delimitations regarding the scope, definitions and classifications used. Legal bases and important definitions are also dealt with.

Then the essential calculation bases, the weighting pattern and the samples are described. Data sources drawn upon are presented in detail as well as the exact procedure of determining the weights and selecting the various samples (basket of goods, reporting units, priced items). The description of the work undertaken every month to determine the index starts with Chapter 6 - “Data collection”. In addition to the product specifications required, the organisation of data collection and the way in which incoming data are checked at the Federal Statistical Office are explained. The section is completed by a description of what is done when no data have been delivered.

The next chapters describe the procedure followed in the case of changed product quality and the inclusion of new goods, while Chapter 9 deals with index calculation. Only when all data to be included have been processed and edited completely can the index be calculated. Changed qualities have to be considered as well as goods that are new on the market. One chapter deals with the exact calculation of the index, describing the aggregation of the individual price series in two stages. In a first step, elementary indices are formed for each position of the goods basket which in a second step are aggregated to indices of a higher aggregation level. The chapter ends with the description of what is done in the case of rebasing, which generally takes place every five years.

It has to be noted that individual products have special features which are due to specific data collection and calculation methods. For that reason, Chapter 10 treats special problems related with individual products, dealing with mineral oil products, machinery, data processing equipment and electronic components as well as vessels and aircraft and the energy sources electricity and natural gas. In Chapter 11 comes a critical discussion of potential error sources and how to deal with them. A closer look is taken at the individual steps from determining the weighting pattern and the samples, the collection of data to the handling of quality changes and new goods and the calculation of the index. The organisational preconditions and procedures at the Federal Statistical Office as well as measures of quality assurance are treated in detail in Chapter 12. The structure and procedure in the case of rebasing and monthly index calculation is examined.

The last chapter of the handbook is Chapter 13 - Dissemination, which deals with the various possibilities of accessing the data. It has to be distinguished here between current results, cross-section publications and meta information of the statistics. Detailed annexes and a glossary supplement the texts and provide background information for users.

The structure of the handbook makes it possible to study individual chapters without having to refer to other chapters. Due to methodology improvements in determining the index of producer prices for industrial products (domestic sales), individual sections and chapters have to be

¹ “Producer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice”, edited by the International Monetary Fund, ISBN 1-58906-304-X.

updated on a continuous basis. The handbook is regarded as a dynamic product, with changes in the surroundings and of framework conditions requiring a high degree of flexibility. Therefore, individual parts are continuously adjusted to the current situation.

Download

In addition to the quality report, there now is a detailed publication for reference and information which may be downloaded free of charge from the homepage of the Federal Statistical Office at <http://www.destatis.de/>.

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Report on the specialised committee on “service statistics“

On 15 March 2007 a meeting of the specialised committee on “service statistics“ was held at the Federal Statistical Office, Branch Office Bonn. On the agenda were information and discussions on service statistics, cost structure statistics, the survey of information and communication technologies and the progress made with the further development of the classification of economic activities.

The participants from the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, the German Bundesbank, the Federal Network Agency, numerous federal associations and the statistical offices of the Länder were informed about the objectives and results of the study on “The level of the burden placed on businesses by official statistics“ with a focus on the service sector. The German Institute for Economic Research had been commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology to prepare that study in 2004 in order to quantify the workload imposed by the reporting duties of official statistics on enterprises obliged to provide information.

A chance to disburden respondents further from reporting duties for statistics purposes is provided by the new online reporting procedure eSTATISTIK.core. The members of the specialised committee were informed about that new procedure, which automatically extracts the data required by the bodies of statistics from business accounting and passes them on to a central data entry point. eSTATISTIK.core has been offered for use to respondents as part of the annual structural survey since reference year 2006, and from the first quarter of 2008 it will be available for quarterly reporting on the short-term economic development.

With the results of reference year 2004, structural data are available in Germany for enterprises and institutions of sections I and K of the classification of economic activities for a total of five reporting years. So there was the opportunity to report on the development of several benchmarks in these sections at the meeting of the specialised committee, for example the number of enterprises and institutions and the persons working there as well as the turnover they had realised. Also, information was supplied on the further development of the European Structural Business Statistics Regulation. Apart from the coverage of additional variables (gross operating surplus, expenditure on temporary employees and number of wage earners and salaried employees in terms of full-time equivalents), this regulation provides for a breakdown of turnover by customer headquarters and products for certain business-related branches of economic activity in Annex VIII. In this context, information was provided on the experience gathered by the Federal Statistical Office during its participation in the pilot study on “Business services, 2004“ (“Turnover in services by types“) initiated by Eurostat.

The legal basis and the methodology were presented which are presently used to prepare quarterly short-term indicators in the service sector. After an outlook had been given on future European requirements, the mixed model used for preparing short-term indicators from the second quarter of 2007 (reference quarter) was presented. Here the statistically relevant information on all enterprises with fewer than 250 persons employed and an annual turnover of less than EUR 15 million is obtained from administrative data. Only the data required of the remaining large enterprises (about 4 100) are collected by means of a primary survey.

The members of the specialised committee were informed about recent results of the latest cost structure surveys of physicians', dentists' and veterinarians' practices, and the burden on enterprises and its reduction as part of cost structure statistics in other service areas. Results were presented also of the survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in enterprises conducted in reference year 2006.

Finally, the participants of the specialised committee meeting were informed about the essential general, methodological and structural alterations in relation with the introduction of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev. 2), in particular regarding the coverage of service statistics, and on the progress of work and the further work and time schedule until NACE Rev. 2 will be used for structural surveys from reference year 2008 and for short-term statistics from the first quarter of 2009.

On the whole, the meeting of the specialised committee contributed to a useful exchange of opinions on the various up-to-date issues in the field of service statistics.

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New statistics of charges in water supply and waste water disposal

When the Environmental Statistics Law was revised in August 2005, national legislation was adjusted to modified framework conditions in the field of statistics at EU level, and the data requirements of official environmental statistics were harmonised with national, European and international reporting duties. In the sphere of water statistics, an essential requirement of the European Water Framework Directive is met with the coverage of water and sewerage charges, namely the attempt to quantify the costs of water use and to obtain information on pricing.

Purpose of the survey

The statistics aims to present public water and sewerage charges in Germany completely. The data obtained may be helpful for political decisions to be taken on water protection measures and be drawn upon for the further development of water supply and waste water disposal systems. In the focus are economic analyses of charges for water use and the related efficient use of water resources as required by the Water Framework Directive. The main users of that statistics are the Federal Ministry for the Environment, the Federal Environmental Agency, environmental-economic accounting and Eurostat, and the competent authorities of the Länder. Other users are large water suppliers and municipalities, associations and bodies related with water supply and waste water disposal, research institutions, and other private users.

Type of survey and organisation

In line with the periodicity of the survey of public water supply and waste water disposal conducted since the seventies already, water and sewerage charges will be covered from reference year 2007 (Art. 11 Para. 2 No. 4 of the Environmental Statistics Law) at intervals of three years. In contrast to the survey of public water supply and waste water disposal, for the survey of charges of water supply and waste water disposal the survey variables have to be

distinguished by individual years (reference year and the two previous years). The reference date of the survey of charges is 1 January of the reference year and the two preceding years, respectively. The survey period is April to May of the reference year.

The survey is conducted decentrally via the statistical offices of the Länder. As a rule, the group of respondents presently includes units of the branches 41 001 to 41 003 (water supply), 90 011 and 90 012 (waste water disposal) according to the German classification of economic activities 2003 (WZ 2003). In the new WZ 2008, these units will presumably be listed under WZ 36 water supply and WZ 37 waste water disposal. Units of other branches may be included into the survey if they have assumed tasks of public water supply or public waste water disposal. In addition to the bodies, corporations, enterprises and institutions operating public water supply or waste water disposal facilities, respondents are the municipalities responsible for public water supply and waste water disposal. The interpretation of the concept "public interest" differs between the Länder as it is based on the specific water legislation of the Länder. The definition of public water supply or waste water disposal depends, among others, on the number of inhabitants supplied. The standards in the Länder vary between 20 and 50 inhabitants connected (in contrast to private water supply and waste water disposal).

The legal basis is the Environmental Statistics Law of 2005 mentioned above. The obligation to respond is laid down in Art. 14 Para. 2 No. 8 b of that Law in connection with Art. 15 of the Federal Statistics Law.

The survey documents are standardised; instead of filling in the traditional paper questionnaire respondents may complete an online form provided for Internet data collection by the statistical offices of the Federation and the Länder. The survey is conducted in the Länder either with two questionnaires for enterprises (11 UT drinking water, 11 UA waste water) or with a questionnaire for municipalities (11 G drinking water and waste water) and corresponding Internet masks for enterprises and municipalities. The enterprises and municipalities obliged to respond use their own administrative material as data basis.

Variables covered

The survey to be taken every three years records the data of water and sewerage charges with a breakdown by variables depending on consumption and variables independent of consumption:

1. for water extraction:

a) charge depending on consumption: price per m³ used. That price is to include all partial charges for final consumers such as water withdrawal charge, investment contribution and other consumption-related charges. Non-recurring payments such as connection charges are not included.

b) charge independent of consumption: common monthly household charge irrespective of consumption, related to the standard household meter size and/or annual consumption class.

2. for waste water disposal:

a) quantity-related charge: waste water or sewage charge per m³ related to the quantity of fresh water purchased and other charges related to quantity per m³, e.g. industrial water.

b) surface-related charge: sewerage charge per m², charge for precipitation and surface water per m² of sealed or other surface and standard annual household charges unrelated to quantity and surface as for instance basic charge and flat charge.

Outlook

It is planned to publish first results at the end of 2007. By then information will be available for all of Germany on charges and components thereof in the spheres of water supply and waste

water disposal. The publication may present results broken down to the following levels: municipality, administrative district, Land, and Federation. Weighted average charges will be calculated. Weighting will be based on the number of inhabitants connected to public water supply/waste water disposal systems. Where this is not possible, weighting will be based on total inhabitants, respectively.

The results will be presented on the homepage of the Federal Statistical Office at (<http://www.destatis.de/>) and the joint Internet portal of the Federation and the Länder (http://www.statistik-portal.de/Statistik-Portal/de_inhalt10.asp). Results may be found there and/or obtained as downloads in excel and pdf formats. It is planned to discuss the results, the methodology of data collection, data processing and analysis with representatives from the scientific community, business and administration after the results will have been published. This may be around mid-2008. Due to the three-year periodicity, the results of such a workshop could be accounted for when the next survey of reference year 2010 is prepared.

Reference

Becker, Grundmann, Hein, Knichel: „Die Erhebungen nach dem neuen Umweltstatistikgesetz von 2005“ (Surveys in accordance with the new Environmental Statistics Law of 2005) in *Wirtschaft und Statistik* 5/2006, p. 552 et. sec.

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Events

Workshop on “marginal part-time work”

Jobs subsidised by labour market policy measures and forms of marginal part-time employment have had a strong influence on employment trends in Germany in recent years. What particularly gained in importance after the April 2003 revision of the law was “marginal part-time work” as defined by the Code of Social Security Legislation. However, available data from different statistical surveys gave a rather controversial description of the size and the evolution of marginal part-time work.

This was the background for a workshop on “marginal part-time work” held at the Federal Statistical Office in Wiesbaden in December 2006 to discuss possible approaches to improvements in the statistical registration of marginal part-time workers and their presentation in labour-market statistics, which were obtained from official and non-official population surveys (microcensus, telephone surveys of the ILO employment status, SOEP, Infratest/ISG studies), register-based social insurance statistics and Employment Accounts.

The workshop aroused much interest. At the invitation of the Federal Statistical Office the workshop was attended not only by representatives from statistical offices of ten federal states of Germany, but also by participants from the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Labour Agency and the German Pension Insurance Fund as well as by representatives of science such as the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), the Federal Labour Agency’s Institute for Labour Market and Job Research (IAB), TNS Infratest and the Centre for Surveys and Methods (ZUMA).

The workshop provided a good and concise overview of the existing official and non-official sources of data on marginal part-time work and gave a transparent description of the methods

used by the Federal Statistical Office to estimate employment data for this specific group of workers, which it is difficult to cover statistically because of the complexity of underlying social insurance legislation. What was generally assessed as problematic was, in particular, the registration of short-term workers as defined by the Code of Social Security Legislation. As there is not yet a sufficiently large data base on this group of persons and on short-term workers in the field of domestic services, one must rely on model calculations to estimate their employment.

Nevertheless, it was not disputed in the discussion that the Federal Statistical Office's Employment Accounts, which also provided the basis for the employment estimations made by the statistical offices of the federal states, had to be regarded at present as the most complete and reliable source of data on marginal part-time work, because they regularly considered and assessed all available information and data sources and because they were made in the context of national accounts. The representatives from offices keeping employment registers promised to support the Federal Statistical Office's model calculations aimed to further consolidate Employment Accounts, creating additional possibilities for analysis needed for the continued improvement of Employment Accounts.

Science representatives recommended that methodological studies should be intensified in order to deal with undercoverage of marginal part-time work by the microcensus compared to other data sources. They suggested, in particular, that follow-up interviews should be made to empirically quantify the measurement errors of the microcensus and that this should be used as a basis for the development of methods to correct measurement errors.

This suggestion is to be implemented immediately according to a decision taken by the statistical offices of the Federation and the federal states. Results of the first follow-up interviews are to be made available for the microcensus by late 2007 so that they can be used to improve extrapolation and weighting as soon as possible. Another major goal pursued on a permanent basis by the Federal Statistical Office in cooperation with the statistical offices of the federal states is quality assurance regarding data collection in the microcensus. Apart from periodic follow-up interviews, it also includes effective methods of supervising interviewers to make sure that the survey is indeed conducted as a standardised interview.

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7th scientific meeting on “Quality Management and Quality Assurance”

Since 1995 the Federal Statistical Office has held joint scientific meetings with the ADM Association of German Market and Social Research Institutes and the Working Party of Social Science Institutes (ASI) on a two-year cycle. This year's seventh joint meeting, dealing with “Quality Management and Quality Assurance”, took place in Wiesbaden on 28 and 29 June 2007. The meeting was moderated by Dr. Manfred Ehling, chief of the Federal Statistical Office's Institute for Research and Development in Federal Statistics.

After a welcome message from Walter Radermacher, President of the Federal Statistical Office, Dr. Ehling delivered an introductory talk on the subject of data quality management.

The following report was presented by Dr. Holger Mühlbauer from the German Institute for Standardisation (DIN), Berlin, describing the evolution of the standard DIN ISO 20252 “Market, Opinion and Social Research”.

Then Erich Wiegand, managing director of ADM, Frankfurt-on-Main, presented the standards and norms of market and social research.

Olaf Hofmann from the German Association for Online Research, Hürth, informed participants about quality standards of access panels, dealing in particular with the evolution of the ISO norm for access panels.

Dr. Silke I. Keil and Dr. Katja Neller from Stuttgart University jointly reported on the organisation and the main elements of ex-ante quality checks in the European Social Survey.

Michael Pusler from Hubert Burda Media, Munich, delivered a talk explaining the quality requirements of customers from the media business (publishing houses), which survey research is supposed to meet.

The first day of the meeting was concluded by a talk of Ulrike Timm from the Federal Statistical Office. She introduced the Manual for the Assessment of Data Quality in Official Statistics, giving an overview of the presently used quality assessment methods and tools and making recommendations on how these tools and methods should be used in the data production process and combined with each other, if necessary.

At the beginning of the second day Martina Hahn from Eurostat presented the Code of Practice of the European Statistical System.

Christine Buchwald and Katja Lukanow from the Centre for Social Research, Halle, at the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg provided a detailed report giving insight into the possibilities of quality checks in telephone interviews.

Hartmut Scheffler, chairman of the managing board of the ADM Association of German Market and Social Research Institutes, Frankfurt-on-Main, reported on education and training as a tool of quality assurance. Among other things, he introduced the newly created job “Specialist for Market and Social Research”, a vocational training occupation offered since 1 August 2006.

In conclusion of the scientific meeting, Dr. Hariet Köstner from Forschungswerk GmbH, Nuremberg, described the requirements and benefits of certification in market and social research and explained the process of certification.

The conference volume with the contributions of this scientific meeting will be published in the “Conference Reports” series issued by the Information Centre for Social Sciences (IZ); it will probably be available in autumn 2007. The reports of the two previous joint scientific meetings on “Online Surveys” and “Data Fusion and Data Integration” were also published in this series; for more information on these conference reports, please, refer to:

<http://www.gesis.org/Information/Forschungsuebersichten/index.htm>

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5th user conference "Research with the Microcensus" Analysis of social structure and social change; 15 – 17 November 2007, ZUMA, Mannheim

In empirical social and economic sciences it has been possible to use microcensus data as Scientific Use Files ever since the reference year 1973.¹

More concretely, the data available as Scientific Use Files relate to 1973, 1976, 1982, 1989, 1991 and 1993 as well as 1995 - 2005, covering a period of 32 years.² In addition, a panel data set of the microcensus (1996-1999) has recently become available for analysis as a Scientific Use File³ and work is in progress on a regional file of the microcensus.

The 5th user conference will entirely be dedicated to the discussion of this greatly extended database and its possible uses. At the same time the microcensus celebrates its fiftieth birthday in 2007, a fact the conference will duly appreciate.

The conference is meant for researchers who already worked with Scientific Use Files of the microcensus or who want to use such data in the future. The conference is expected to discuss the results obtained from the use of such data for research activities.

But apart from that, the meeting will also be focussed on a mutual exchange of experience between users and with statistical offices as data producers.

To find the results and contributions of the past four user conferences, please, refer to:

<http://www.gesis.org/Dauerbeobachtung/gml/Service/Veranstaltungen/Index.htm>

The conference will be held and organised by the German Microdata Lab (ZUMA) and the Federal Statistical Office's Division VIII C – Microcensus.

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¹ See the contribution "Microcensus 1973, 1976 and 1982 available as Scientific Use Files for research" in: ZUMA Nachrichten 59: 137-138.

² See: www.gesis.org/Dauerbeobachtung/GML/Aktuelles

³ See the contribution on the microcensus panel file in ZUMA-Nachrichten 59:141-142.