Harmonisation of Business and Consumer Surveys: State of Play

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Business Surveys

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Brussels, 14 November 2007
# National vs harmonised questionnaires

## Major differences by type and by survey, 2007

(number of questions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Reference period</th>
<th>Different concepts</th>
<th>Missing questions</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National vs harmonised questionnaires

Major differences by country, 2007
(number of questions)

- Reference period
- Different concepts
- Missing questions
- Others
### National vs harmonised questionnaires: Different reference periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>DE, IT, NL, SI</td>
<td>Q1: reference period 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Q11: reference period 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Q13: 'last 3 months' instead of 'currently'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>BE, DE, NL</td>
<td>Q1: reference period 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>BE, DE</td>
<td>Q1: reference period 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE, IE</td>
<td>Q4: reference period 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Q2+4: reference period 1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Q1: 'present' business situation instead of 'over the past 3 months'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>AT, IE, NL, RO</td>
<td>Q13+14: reference period 2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National vs harmonised questionnaires: Different concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Q5: 'demand' instead of 'production'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Q12: assessment of 'export business' in light of export orders and ongoing negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Q12: 'export volume' instead of 'export orders'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Q6: 'average prices at which domestic orders are booked' instead of 'selling prices'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q9: 'level of output below capacity' instead of 'production capacity'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Q4: 'demand' instead of 'business activity/sales'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Q4: 'situation' instead of 'business activity/sales'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## National vs harmonised questionnaires: Missing questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>DE, IE</td>
<td>Q10: &quot;How many months of production are assured by your current overall order books?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q11: &quot;How have your orders developed over the past 3 months?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>DK, IE, UK</td>
<td>Q6: &quot;...about how many months' work is accounted for by work in hand...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>PT, NL</td>
<td>Q1: &quot;How has your business situation developed over the past 3 months?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q7: &quot;What main factors are currently limiting your business?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National vs harmonised questionnaires: Main conclusions

- A high number of deviations persists for the industry survey
- The most frequent type of deviation concerns the reference period, with some convergence in the choice of the reference period among the institutes concerned
- There are a few missing questions. This type of divergence is the easiest to deal with
Sectoral coverage of the services survey

• Three assessment criteria:

  ➢ **Exhaustiveness**
    The sectoral coverage of the survey should be as wide as possible

  ➢ **Homogeneity**
    Attention should be paid to sectors with an idiosyncratic cyclical behaviour

  ➢ **Comparability**
    The sectors covered by national surveys should coincide at the maximum
## Sectoral coverage of the services survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NACE code</th>
<th>NACE division</th>
<th>Nb of countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Travel agencies and tour operators</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Machinery and equipment renting</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Computer and related services</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Other business activities</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Post and telecommunications</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Real estate activities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Sewage and refuse disposal</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Financial intermediation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Insurance and pension funds</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Activities auxiliary to financial intermediation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Research and development</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Health and social work</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Membership organisations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Recreation, sport &amp; culture</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Other service activities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues for discussion

• On questionnaires:
  - Could delegates that use a different reference period or a different concept for some questions explain their reasons for doing so?
  - Could delegates report on their plans to further harmonise their questionnaires (e.g. to include missing questions) and/or on their experience with changes in the questionnaires?

• On the services survey:
  - Could delegates report on their plans to further extend the coverage of their services survey?
  - What will be the impact of the implementation of NACE Rev. 2 on the services survey’s design?