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- See www.blue-ets.eu deliverables 2.1 and 2.2 for detailed reports.
Outline

• Reason and context of WP2 research
• Research questions
• Method
• Results
• Recommendations
Reason and Context WP2

• Response burden relevant for businesses and NSIs (data quality and efficiency).
• Many NSIs monitor and try to reduce response burden in business surveys.
• Variety in practices.
• Purpose of this project: get overview of current practices to start discussion on best practices and standardisation.
Research questions

• How do NSIs measure response burden caused by business surveys?
• What practices do NSIs use to reduce this burden?
• What is known about the costs and effects of these burden reduction actions?
Method

1. Literature review
2. Pilot test of questionnaire for NSIs
3. Survey of NSIs to assess:
   • if and how NSIs measure response burden;
   • If and how they try to reduce response burden;
   • what is documented about costs and effects of burden reduction actions.

Questionnaire sent to 45 NSIs of 42 countries:
• All NSIs participating in the European Statistical System (and candidate countries).
• NSIs from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and US.
• Web survey online from November 2010-February 2011.
• Response from 41 institutes and 39 countries.
Results: burden measurement

- 34 (of 41) NSIs measure actual burden (time spent).
- Large heterogeneity of definition and calculation of actual burden, e.g.:
  - Are re-contacts included?
  - Are all sent or only completed questionnaires included?
- 12 measure perceived burden (perception of time and/or difficulty).
- 17 NSIs conducted studies on how business perceive NSIs.
- 16 NSIs have registers of response burden per business unit.
- 9 countries have national registers of business surveys.
Results: burden reduction actions

• Survey assessed implementation of 3 types of burden reduction actions:
  – reduction of amount of info asked;
  – actions to make questionnaire completion easier; and
  – other actions that improve communication with respondents.

• NSIs are very active in reducing burden: on average NSIs have implemented 12 of 17 proposed actions to at least some of their business surveys
# Actions that reduce amount of information asked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr. of NSIs that have applied action (of 41 NSIs)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of the number of requested items in survey requests</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use register/admin. data to replace (part) of data collected from businesses</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of the sample size</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samples are co-ordinated and/or rotated</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of the frequency of data collection</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of the number of re-contacts with businesses</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Actions that improve questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr. of NSIs that have applied action (of 41 NSIs)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic versions of self-completion questionnaires are available.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires have been tested with the respondents to assess how well they understand the questionnaire and are able to provide the data.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data can be provided by non-automatic fixed format.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data of previous reporting periods are pre-printed in the questionnaires (e.g. dependent interviewing).</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data can be provided by automatic extracted files from the businesses administrative systems (e.g. XBRL).</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Actions that improve communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr. of NSIs that have applied action (of 41 NSIs)</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help desk available for respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help for respondents on the web site</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is provided on the concrete use of statistical output based on the survey request</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents can receive personalized statistical feedback</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts with large businesses are managed by single account manager</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey requests are included in a survey calendar that gives businesses an overview of which surveys they can expect</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: reports on costs and effects of burden reduction actions

• Some NSIs have reports available on development of response burden over time.

• Hardly any studies on costs and effects of burden reduction actions.
Inspiring practices

• Central coordination of response burden management by Ombudsman (Statistics Canada) or Respondents Advocate (Statistics New Zealand).

• Proactive management of “respondent load” by Statistics New Zealand.
Recommendations

1. Develop and implement standardised measurement of response burden in ESS
   • Include both perceived and actual burden
   • Measure and manage response burden at the level of NSI, business and survey


⇓ Case studies reported in BLUE-ETS deliverable 8.1 demonstrate importance of monitoring and managing response burden.
Recommendations

2. Organise a central place/person in each NSI to coordinate measurement and management of response burden.

3. Costs and effects of burden reduction actions should be monitored, reviewed, documented and shared.

4. Research on business data collection methodology should move on from qualitative explorative research to quantitative and preferably experimental research designs.