UNECE

Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics

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Preface

Business demography and entrepreneurship statistics provide information about the creation, survival and dissolution of businesses and about the characteristics and activities of entrepreneurs. Over the previous decades, interest in these types of statistics has increased as they are sources of information about innovation, competitiveness, economic growth and job creation. Such information is used to inform business policies, for economic planning, and for analytical and research purposes.

The production of business demography and entrepreneurship statistics of suitable quality requires good data sources. The statistical business register, which plays a central role in the production of economic statistics, can provide the statistical infrastructure for producing business demography and entrepreneurship statistics in the form of structured data on business units and their characteristics and activities. The statistical business register can be the sole source of information or may be combined with data from other sources. Use of the statistical business register in addition to, or instead of, other sources, provides an opportunity to reduce costs, increase efficiency and improve the quality of the resulting statistics.

The Guidelines provide practical guidance on how to develop and maintain statistical business registers to support the production of business demography and entrepreneurship statistics. The Guidelines contain definitions and compilation guidance for key demographic events and propose business demography indicators that can be produced directly from the register. They also describe the requirements for the statistical business register to produce business demography indicators and give guidance on linking the register with other data sources.

The Guidelines were developed by a UNECE Task Force established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians. It is hoped that statistical offices will find the Guidelines useful.

Background and acknowledgements

In 2015, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the UNECE Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers (SBRs), which provide practical guidance and recommendations on the establishment and maintenance of SBRs. The CES recognized the central role of SBRs in the production of economic statistics and the potential for using SBRs to produce business demography and entrepreneurship statistics. The CES also recognized a growing interest in entrepreneurship statistics as an area where new statistics could be developed based on the SBR and other data sets that national statistical offices have already assembled.

The growing importance of entrepreneurship statistics was first noted by the Bureau of the CES in 2013, when the future work on entrepreneurship statistics was discussed, based on an in-depth review prepared by OECD and Eurostat. The review highlighted areas where further work was needed to improve the production of business demography and entrepreneurship statistics, for example, by developing linkages between datasets, and by using longitudinal data sets.

With this background, in July 2016, the Bureau of the CES established a Task Force to develop guidelines for producing business demography and entrepreneurship statistics. Following the terms of reference of the Task Force, the Guidelines describe the statistical infrastructure required to support the production of business demography and entrepreneurship statistics. More specifically, they provide:

a) Guidance on how to develop SBRs to support the production of business demography and entrepreneurships statistics, including:
   - Definitions and compilation guidelines for key demographic events.
   - Suggestions of demographic statistics that could be produced directly from SBR.
   - Recommendations on the requirements for the SBR to produce business demography information. longitudinally, annually and sub-annually, and by region within country.

b) Guidance on linking the SBR with information from other data sources to produce business demography and entrepreneurship statistics.

The Guidelines take into account existing relevant material, in particular the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* (UNECE, 2015), the *Manual on Business Demography Statistics* (Eurostat & OECD, 2007) and the *Business Registers Recommendations Manual* (Eurostat, 2010) and make use of the definitions contained in these documents. The target audiences for the Guidelines are SBR statisticians in national statistics offices, experts in the production of business demography and entrepreneurship statistics, and users of these statistics.

During the drafting the Guidelines over the period 2016 to 2018, the Task Force worked mainly through the exchange of e-mails and audio conferences. The Task Force had also two face-to–face meetings. Drafts of chapters and relevant materials were shared on a common, designated UNECE wiki page. During the first half-year, the Task Force agreed on the time plan of activities and worked on a detailed outline for each chapter of the Guidelines. The structure and content of the draft chapters was discussed in detail during the first face-to–face meeting that took place in Geneva on 13-14 June 2017.

An outline of the draft Guidelines was presented to a broader audience over the period 27-29 September 2017 during the joint UNECE, Eurostat and OECD biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Business Registers. Meeting participants were given the opportunity to submit written comments and suggestions on the draft chapters. The comments received were considered in subsequent versions of the Guidelines.

The second face-to-face meeting of the Task Force took place on 27 September 2017 in Paris, back-to-back with the meeting of the Group of Experts on Business Registers. This meeting discussed the draft

chapters and the time plan for remaining work. From September 2017 to January 2018, the Task Force continued to work on the draft chapters and clarify outstanding issues. A draft version of the Guidelines was finalised in March 2018 and circulated to all members of the CES for written consultation. The Guidelines were endorsed by the CES plenary session in June 2018. Comments and suggestions received from CES member countries and organisations were incorporated in the Guidelines. The final editing and formatting of the Guidelines took place from July to November 2018.

Acknowledgements

The Guidelines are the results of the joint work of the members of the Task Force. The Task Force was co-chaired by René Beaudoin (Canada) and Norbert Rainer (independent expert). The other members of the Task Force were Jamie Brunet, Danny Leung, Gaetan St-Louis and Christian Wolfe (Canada), Jaakko Salmela (Finland), Susana Pérez and Hugo Hernández Ramos (Mexico), Lico Hoekema and Rico Konen (Netherlands), Brandy Yarbrough and James Hunt (United States, Census Bureau), David Talan and Kevin Cooksey (United States, Bureau of Labor Statistics), Axel Behrens, Amerigo Liotti, Georgios Papadopoulos, Sarmite Visocka and Samuli Rikama (Eurostat), Mariarosa Lunati (OECD) and Carsten Boldsen (UNECE).

Each chapter of the Guidelines was drafted by a lead author with contributing authors providing comments and proposals. The lead authors were: Christian Wolfe and René Beaudoin (Canada), Norbert Rainer (independent expert), Susana Pérez and Hugo Hernández Ramos (Mexico), Lico Hoekema (Netherlands) and Mariarosa Lunati (OECD). The country examples in chapter 5 were prepared by Susana Pérez and Hugo Hernández Ramos (Mexico), Eunjin An (South Korea) and Brandy Yarbrough and James Hunt (United States, Census Bureau). The annexes of the Guidelines consist of three country examples, which were provided by John Baldwin, Danny Leung and Anne-Marie Rollin (Canada), Peter Bøegh Nielsen (Denmark), and Rico Konen (Netherlands). Manpreet Singh (ILO) contributed by providing references to the International Classification of Status in Employment that was adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2018.

The Guidelines were edited by Michael Colledge to ensure clarity of language and consistency across chapters. The final version of the Guidelines was reviewed and formatted for publication by Albert Bredt (UNECE).

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA), an intergovernmental organisation comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, has provided financial support for the production of the Guidelines. The EFTA Statistical Office provides statistical assistance to countries in cooperation with other international organisations.

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