

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BUSINESS DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

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AN INTERNATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT SURVEY AND THE COVERAGE OF MICRO ENTERPRISES – DOES ONE-SIZE FIT ALL?

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The second European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER-2), carried out in 2014, involved almost 50,000 establishments across all business size classes and activity sectors in 36 European countries. Like ESENER-1, its focus was on how European workplaces manage occupational safety and health (OSH) risks in practice. ESENER-2 built on and extended the approach used in ESENER-1 by including, for the first time, micro establishments with 5-9 employees and establishments in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) undertook a review to consider the impact of this expansion of the survey universe. The review was informed by and structured around the Total Survey Error framework. This paper focuses on its findings on **measurement error** in relation to the inclusion of **micro establishments**.

In addition to a review of the ESENER-2 questionnaire content and comparative assessment of survey responses by establishment size, in-depth qualitative interviews were carried out with respondents from 28 micro establishments: 14 each in Spain and Romania. The participating establishments were operating in the construction, retail, HORECA (hotel, restaurant, catering) and agriculture/forestry sectors – in which micro establishments traditionally predominate.

The findings suggested that the participating micro establishments were relatively successful and OSH-confident businesses. Nevertheless, there were also indications of a mismatch between the intent of ESENER-2 questions on key aspects of OSH arrangements and their interpretation by respondents in these micro establishments. Moreover, there was some evidence that the understanding and interpretation of these questions varied with establishment size, sector, and regulatory and business contexts. All these findings resonate strongly with those of EU-OSHA's recent in-depth investigation focused on understanding and improving OSH in micro and small enterprises in Europe (the 2014-2017 SESAME project), as well as with the literature more generally.

The review therefore indicates that the inclusion of micro establishments in a large-scale international survey of businesses' OSH practice presents significant challenges, in particular around:

- Refusals at recruitment and during the survey process.

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- Respondents' understanding and interpretation of key concepts and terms, and its implications for survey development.
- The collection of sufficient contextual detail for meaningful data analysis and interpretation.

Overall, the review suggests that one-size does not fit all, and care must be taken to develop survey methods and content that are appropriate for the smallest as well as larger businesses. To this end, the review makes a number of recommendations for improving data collection from micro businesses in future waves of ESENER.



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