SHOULD WE APPROACH DIFFERENTLY TO DATA COLLECTION FROM LARGE BUSINESSES?

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Abstract

In 2016 there were more than 200,000 companies in the Business Register of Slovenia, of which 324 were businesses with more than 250 employees. These large companies are annually on average included in 13.4 statistical surveys, and have to answer on average 190.5 questionnaires, which is much more than the average for all businesses (2.3 surveys and 4.6 questionnaires).

When collecting statistical data it is natural to use different approaches for different types of reporters including when it comes to their size. SURS distinguishes key reporters from other units and gives them greater importance in the data collection and the data control. A special project for selective data editing is currently underway in which larger units will have special attention in data editing. However, SURS does not use a special management system for the treatment of large businesses.

Special treatment of large enterprises could be considered in all processes of data collection. We can start with sampling and review if large companies could be selected less frequently. The second area is communication, where we could consider an individual approach to large businesses. Data collection itself is a wide area with lots of possibilities, including adjustment of collecting the data to reporters' systems (pull instead of push approach). Furthermore, if we were to decide for a special strategy for large businesses, we should choose a wider approach, including also a question of confidentiality, non-response, etc.

On the other hand, we have to realise that large businesses are not the only important survey respondents. Medium-sized (50–249 employees) and small (10–49 employees) companies are also very important groups for which we could not afford individual approach but could

prepare special target groups. On the other hand, different categorization of important businesses should be considered. For example, if we further analyse large companies by activity, we can see that companies registered under economic activity C – Manufacturing are on average included in 19.4 statistical surveys, and have to answer on average 140.1 questionnaires, while, on the other hand, companies registered under economic activity Q – Human Health and Social Work Activities are on average included in 5.2 statistical surveys, and have to answer on average 13.2 questionnaires. SURS has a new system for measuring actual burden of reporting units. We could take a bottom up approach, where we could first identify individual large reporters and try to gather them into homogeneous groups. We could then prepare different strategies for different focus groups.

Strategies and activities that we would like to explore in more detail are:

- Coordinated approach in communicating with key respondents. This does not mean that one person should always contact an individual business. One person cannot efficiently manage different subject areas for which data are collected and it is usual that in businesses more than one person completes statistical reports.
- Further development of coordinated sampling.
- Using predefined datasets instead of web questionnaires. SURS would prepare the structure of an electronic record for individual statistical surveys. Businesses would prepare reports from their information systems. Such a solution would be particularly useful for businesses that are involved in some statistical surveys with certainty.
- Use of data from information systems of the reporters. We could for example arrange with businesses to export their data from their accounting information systems from which we can obtain authentic information on assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses as shown in the general ledger. It would first be necessary to obtain precise information about the used businesses chart of accounts and internal bookkeeping rules.

Keywords: data collection, large businesses, communication with reporters

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