

# FIFTH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BUSINESS DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

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## DESIGNING AN INSTRUMENT FOR COLLECTING DATA FROM POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

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### Abstract

Statistics Norway collects income and expenditure data from all active political parties in Norway on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. We do so by using a web questionnaire. The questionnaire has been altered and improved each year since it was launched on [www.altinn.no](http://www.altinn.no) for the first time in 2014.

We have used techniques such as focus groups, in depth interviews and user testing along the way, and during the years met and received feedback from hundreds of representatives from the different political parties on different levels throughout Norway. We have tried out different designs, redesigned and tried again. This recurrent process of trial and error has given us some useful insights and experiences.

One lesson learned is that it isn't necessarily always fruitful to transform tables or matrixes into a series of single questions. We found that overview and consistency, and also recognizability, were crucial in this case; more so than exposing the respondents to one question at the time. One likely drawback is of course that the respondent this way is more likely to miss out on useful help text, explanations and other additional information.

Another conclusion is that automated validations and controls can and should be used wisely, not solely to prevent the respondent from sending in a faulty result, but first and foremost to help and guide the respondent through the questionnaire.

Also worth mentioning is the reuse and prefill of existing information (data collected earlier and data from other sources) and the introduction of a summarizing overview at the end of the questionnaire.

The next step will most likely be to enhance the data collection instrument so that the respondents are able to upload their income and expenses records to the questionnaire, given that they use the standard bookkeeping template provided by the official government.