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Regarding the final draft on Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics

This is a very ambitious paper on important issues for economic statistics. We see it as a "vision statement" for how statistics should function in an ideal world. Integration and collaboration is important to be able to reduce inconsistencies and obtain coherence. From a users perspective this is, of course, a main objective.

Our interpretation of the paper is that National Accounts (i.e SNA/BOP) will set the demands on primary statistics, which is also the case today. NA is a main user of primary statistics and has the knowledge to see were inconsistencies develop. Thereby, the need for reconciliation will decrease and the quality of NA will increase.

- Business registers will have a main role in future statistics by setting a base for all economic statistics, in line with international accounting standards and harmonised classifications. A need for well defined structure or MNE:s is also demanded to be able to follow international trade flows.
- Statistical surveys should be standardized according to international key principles and connected to business registers, to decrease response burden as much as possible.
- Integration of all statistical systems (social, economic and environmental) should be implemented. Institutional cooperation of all statistical offices would be needed and the development of an integrated statistical culture.
- A centralized system would be an advantage to obtain consistent, coherent statistical data. Process management is a suitable tool to secure standardization.
- Indicators are needed, for a daily update of economic development. Story-telling is seen as a way to set statistical data in a perspective as

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well as indicators. Visualization may give a more medial view of the development and helps to make statistics more useful for everybody.

We agree with the main message of the guidelines but must stress that this is to be seen as a “vision statement”, as the situation in most NSO:s is not in line with this goal today. To be able to change NSO in line with this “vision” a huge effort is needed, both regarding statistical culture, methods and mindset. To be able to change this it need time, financial resources and new skills.

The focus on statistical estimation must then be changed to a focus on long time series, not just for National Accounts but for all statistics. This is a must to be able to form story-telling and visualisation and a strong demand from users. For many statisticians this will be a main challenge as a more analytical skill is needed. This change can, therefore, not be done easily but need time and education.

The present statistical system is in many cases based on a system of surveys, which are not coordinated. Business registers do not cover the whole economy and have many deficiencies, that needs to be handled. This is not a problem in Sweden were we have been building business registers for a long time, but for many countries it will not be possible to obtain data on such a detailed level. To form an efficient business register that a currently up-to-date, an increased effort is needed. Coordination and harmonised classification will demand a lot of development work in many areas as the manuals between different statistical areas are not harmonised in this manner. Differences in the economic landscape in-between countries may also make it difficult to use the same classifications/standards. The need for a harmonised accounting system is also essential as IFRS are not in place for all countries yet.

For the MNE:s the response burden will increase as demand for a well defined structure of the group is needed as well as internal transactions. This is not in line with the interest of the MNE:s and will probably demand changes in legislation to be able to fulfil user demands.

The institutional set-up of the NSO are differing. Statistics Sweden is a decentralised organisation, and a change in organisation may be needed to be able to obtain consistency and coherence using a bottom-up perspective. This will also take time to set up.

Conclusions:

We agree with the “vision” set up in the Guidelines, but must stress that these goals must be set on a long term perspective for 20-30 years. The main reasons for this is that the culture and mind-set or the statistical community has to be changed, new skills has to be obtained, business registers and manuals has to be harmonised. There is also a risk that the demand for a



decrease in response burden will affect also business registers in such a way that statistical use of registers may be difficult to obtain. In a time of scarce resources it will not be possible to set this on a top priority on the agenda today.

Regards

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