Third Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics
Virtual meeting, 29 September- 1 October 2020

Update Task Teams on Exhaustive Business Registers and Capacity Building
24 September 2020

1. Progress of work of the TTs since the 2nd UNCEBTS meeting
The Task Team on Exhaustive Business registers defined its main goal as developing guidance for the Statistical Business Registers (SBR) to become more inclusive and exhaustive in a rapidly changing economy and to be better tailored to statistical production. At the June 2019 2nd UNCEBTS meeting in New York, we presented our first step as being the development of a strategic view on exhaustive business registers. In September 2019 the Task Team delivered this strategic view as 'a dot on the horizon'. Based on that view a gap analysis was planned to be carried out, but discussions with the Task Team on Capacity Building showed that both teams were working on closely related matters. After all, the Task Team on Capacity Building defined its goal to develop and examine the best ways to reduce the gap between countries in utilizing administrative registers in producing business statistics and integration. The ultimate goal is to leave no one behind.

Therefore we decided to combine forces and work jointly towards the first version of a Statistical Business Register Maturity Model. With an SBR Maturity Model, we hope to create a central repository of knowledge where all NSOs, regardless of the SBR starting point, can get information and learn from best practices in other countries in order to improve or change their SBR to fulfill user needs. On top of that, we have to realize that the world of SBRs is not a static one and it is important to adapt to changes in technical possibilities and economic behavior. This highlights the need for solid maintenance of the SBR Maturity Model in the future.

In September both task teams have delivered as a joint product the first version of the description of the SBR Maturity Model.

2. Reflections on the impact of COVID-19 on the TT work programme
The importance of the work of both task teams TT Exhaustive Business Registers and TT Capacity Building can easily be derived from conclusions drawn after the first day of the Special Meeting of UNCEBTS on the Impact of COVID-19:

- The COVID-19 crisis has also presented opportunities to the statistical community engaging with and responding to users and policymakers more directly: releasing experimental datasets that meet the data quality standards of relevance and timeliness over accuracy; leveraging partnerships with external entities; and an opportunity to restructure the release of statistics to provide a more coherent and integrated picture on the economy, society and the environment.
- The statistical system needs to provide a coherent view of the impact of COVID-19: (and other crises and events) integrating microdata on businesses and employment with macro-data indicators, and not only economic information but also the impact on well-being, including social and environmental indicators.
- The important role of the SBR as a tool for micro-data linking and providing more granular and more timely data has been proven, especially when compared to competing private data providers: ability to apply micro-data linking at the enterprise level to provide highly granular and timely data on the impact of the crisis on businesses. In addition, the use of linked employer-employee datasets (LEED) by some NSOs have allowed linking the impact directly on employment.

- Globalization, digitalization, and local/regional impacts on businesses are likely to be important policy themes moving forward and granular, more detailed data on these phenomena should be included in the SBR to the extent possible.

All of the conclusions above show that it is important to
1) have a SBR that can serve as backbone for statistical analysis. Hence, the work of the Task Team on Capacity Building is very important to leave no one behind.
2) work towards a spine approach of the SBR, so that new sources can easily be linked and used for statistical analysis

Both aspects are covered by these task teams and are also reflected in the SBR Maturity Model.

3. Proposed future areas of work of the TT
We have launched the first version of the framework for a SBR Maturity Model. More iterations are needed to evolve this into the first workable SBR Maturity Model. Next steps to be taken are:
- Develop an assessment questionnaire
- Collect guidelines, best practices, tips and tricks
  - design a matrix to include available documents and training modules that can help NSOs at each dimension to move to the next stage
- Transform into an online version
- Define a maintenance procedure
- Test, enhance and go live

Further development of the SBR Maturity Model will be a joint production of the TT Exhaustive Business Registers and TT Capacity Building.

Another area of work of the Task Team on Exhaustive Business Registers should probably be the discussion about and elaboration on an experimental version of a global group register. The idea is not to start from scratch, but to build on existing initiatives.

4. Possible contribution to areas in the research agenda of the updates of the major framework
We think it would be a good idea to develop a research agenda that will be maintained and steered by the UN Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics. This could be an agenda point for the last day of our meeting (agenda point 5).

Based on the available research agenda of the SNA[1], the Task Team could possibly contribute to the following research issues:
28.   Statistical units (section IV Cross cutting issues)
34.   Informal economy (section V Compilation issues)

Based on the available research agenda of the BPM[2], the Task Team could possibly contribute to the following research issues:
B.15   Sectorization of MNEs

5. Questions for the UNCEBTS
At the Third Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics we hope to hear from the participants:
- Comments and suggestions on the SBR Maturity Model
- Agreement with the proposed future areas of work

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[1] Consolidated SNA Research Agenda, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/Consolidated_SNA_RA.asp
[2] BPM6 Update: Compendium of Research Issues Version 1.0, https://www.imf.org/~/.../compendium-of-issues-note.ash