Abstract

Statistical agencies face the formidable challenge of identifying synergies and streamlining their statistical production processes to remove silos, improve cross-functional collaboration, and align IT infrastructures to support their long-term vision and goals. Statistical business registers (SBRs) play an increasingly prominent role in this endeavor, as they lie at the core of the integration of the multiple data sources and processes involved in the production of integrated official statistics.

As any other large-scale statistical programme, SBRs are expensive to compile and to maintain. Therefore, countries that operate, or plan to develop or upgrade a statistical business register programme, need to justify the necessary investment of resources and make sure they fit within their overall national statistical development programmes and strategies. This includes a clear vision of the needs and priorities that the SBR programme should address, both in support of other statistical programmes and as a source of statistics in its own right.

While their design and the implementation must take into account the specific national circumstances, mapping the various elements of SBR programmes onto a common conceptual framework is crucial to enable the effective documentation and transfer of best practices across different countries, and to advance in the harmonization of statistical methods and data. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) provides such a standardized framework for describing the different processes involved in the production of official statistics, and following its release in 2009, a growing number of statistical organisations have adopted it as a foundation for modernizing and integrating their processes and systems.

Drawing on the ongoing work by the Wiesbaden Group drafting the International Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers, as well as on the results of a recent global assessment of the status of SBRs conducted by the UN Statistics Division, this paper explores the role played by SBR programmes as the backbone of an integrated system of official statistics, using the GSBPM as the overarching framework. In particular, this paper identifies the main roles that SBR programmes have to play in the overall development, operation, and evaluation of national statistical systems, from data collection, through data processing and analysis, and up to dissemination of statistical outputs.