



National Statistics Quality Reviews

Review of the Inter-Departmental Business Register

Comment by the Director of Economic Statistics

1. I am pleased to be able to release today the quality review of the Inter-Departmental Business Register. This is the second of the quality reviews foreseen in the White Paper *Building Trust in Statistics*. It has been conducted in consultation with users both in government and in the business community and with the external involvement of the University of Southampton.
2. The business register within the Office for National Statistics is of pivotal importance to business surveys, to national economic statistics and to small area business demography.
3. The report shows that the IDBR is of good quality and is fit for purpose. It provides the means to produce consistent statistics and to minimise the compliance cost to businesses. The report indicates that the UK register and its operation compare favourably with EU member states, and with other major statistical institutes world-wide. This reflects the commitment of staff and the co-operation of government departments in making the best use of data collected through administrative systems.
4. The report identifies the key strengths of the IDBR and makes a number of valuable recommendations for improving quality and for publishing quality indicators. I accepted all of them in principle, and will be giving them priority in ONS's forthcoming planning round. Those recommendations that can be introduced with little additional resources will be implemented very quickly.
5. The review has identified a range of areas where changes should be made to existing processes in order to meet increasing customer needs. The report contains 29 recommendations that will develop the existing business register as a key element of the ONS infrastructure, delivering a service that meets increasing user demands, while minimising the burden on business. This will be achieved through closer working with the administrative departments and improved use of technology. The changes will, I believe, maintain the prominent position of the UK internationally.

6. A detailed action plan, with fully costed projects, is now being prepared. This plan will be discussed with key users. Decisions on implementation will then be taken in the context of the ONS planning round, taking account of other possibly conflicting priorities. Annual progress reports will be published on this web site.

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Notes:

The members of the review steering group are:

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The electronic version can be found on the National Statistics website (www.statistics.gov.uk) under the Theme of “commerce, energy and industry”.