Scientific Advisory Board
Ingegerd Jansson, U/ARK-S
Suad Elezović, U/ARK-S

# Meeting with the Scientific Advisory Board, December 14th 2012

Attendees of the Board:
Stefan Lundgren, Statistics Sweden, chair
Mats Wadman, Statistics Sweden, co-chair
Ingegerd Jansson, Statistics Sweden, secretary
Professor Jan Bjørnstad, Statistics Norway
Lilli Japec, Statistics Sweden
Professor Frauke Kreuter, University of Maryland
Professor Xavier de Luna, Umeå University
Professor Lars Lyberg, Stockholm University
Professor Daniel Thorburn, Stockholm University
Suad Elezovic, Statistics Sweden

Other attendees:
Martin Axelson, Statistics Sweden
Johanna Laiho-Kauranne, Statistics Sweden
Heather Bergdahl, Statistics Sweden
Åke Pettersson, Statistics Sweden
Håkan Wilén, Statistics Sweden
Jörgen Svensson, Statistics Sweden
Michael Franzén, Statistics Sweden
Anton Färnström, Brå
Charlotta Lindström, Brå
Eva Elvers, Statistics Sweden
Mats Bergdahl, Statistics Sweden
Joakim Malmdin, Statistics Sweden
Martin Ribe, Statistics Sweden
Eva Bolin, Statistics Sweden

Due to Stefan Lundgren being delayed, Lilli Japec opened the meeting. Lilli presented the agenda and summarized reply to recommendations from the previous meeting in May 2012.

**Current issues at Statistics Sweden**

*Speaker*: Stefan Lundgren

Stefan commented on the report to the Swedish government from the Bengt Westerberg investigation about quality in official statistics and the investigation of official statistics for the financial market.

- Reason for investigation: mismatched results and some recent errors at SCB .
- The conclusion is that SCB has a good approach to dealing with errors. SCB functions well and there is no need for dramatic changes.
- Concerning confidentiality there is no need to change anything in the existing system.
- Suggestions to improve access to microdata for researchers, will be further investigated

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- The documentation of the statistics done by  SCB is good but can be improved.
- SCB should be more transparent to customers with respect to pricing, but no changes are suggested.
- Coordination of the system for official statistics should stay within SCB and not be driven by an external agency. The Swedish government will decide on the matter and changes will be made at the earliest in 2014. The investigation suggests that the role of SCB is strengthened.
- SCB has ongoing discussions with the Riksbank (Sweden central bank)and the National Institute for Economic Research (Konjunkturinstitutet) regarding collaboration in the area of Financial Statistics.
- Recommendation concerning the exchange of data: responsibility for financial statistics should move to SCB and the statistical responsibility to the Riksbank's law. Law prohibits competition in this area and SCB should have all responsibility with support in the legislation. The new task would be to assist Riksbank and other institutes as well as supplying them with data about the financial services.

## Reply to recommendations

*Speaker*: Lilli Japec

Lilli commented on the reply to recommendations made at the meeting 2-3 May 2012. Some issues:
- The interviewers will get special education on how to  interview children
- 
- SCB is working on actions in order  to reduce measurement errors such as
    o Having a strategy for testing the questionnaires
    o Implemented co-listening (medlyssning)
    o Monitoring measurements errors in LFS (AKU)
    o A training program for methods, including measurement errors

*Discussion:*
Some points made during the discussion:
- Why is all publication of Census 2011 done by Eurostat, but no national publication? SCB will produce and publish regular household and housing statistics continuously. More up to date than the Census data but differently detailed. There will be a web page at SCB with links to Census 2011 at Eurostat and all the necessary information.
- The past 3 months SCB has done re-interviews for the LFS and we have found the difference that we expected. The main focus is on monthly statistics but SCB will also treat quarterly statistics. More information regarding this will be given at the next meeting

## Quality Indicators

*Speaker:* Heather Bergdahl

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*Discussant:* Johanna Laiho-Kauranne

Heather mentioned that since she sent out the discussion paper we have made some progress.

*Discussion*
Some points made during the discussion:
- The work done on quality indicators is both ambitious and interesting but difficult to understand
- There was a question about the risk level in connection to crisis: is the risk level increasing when the non-response is increasing, i e with external risk factors? The answer was that reasoning concerning the risk level relies on impact, probability and some other non-scientific but more intuitive factors.
- Everyone in the staff should be involved
- More knowledge of the product will give better improvement
- The challenge is how to continue
- It is important to improve our quality as users want accuracy. Quality dimensions discussed:
  - Relevance
  - Accuracy and reliability
  - Timeliness and punctuality (users want information quickly but methodology aspect of timing is not developed as the other aspects).
  - Coherence both from the input and output side (increasing demands for integrated data: new sources of data to be used to reduce the response burden.
  - Accessibility and clarity (linking the data, open data policies, better meta data, improved statistical stories)
  - Cost and burden (further demands on reduction on administrative burden, statistical burden and response burden are expected).
  - Trade-off between the quality dimensions – not to be left out!
  - Additional elements to be examined
  - There is a need for simple tools that can show quality
  - EU requires that we increase our accuracy regarding SILC.
- Documentation and meta data issues:
  - The need for further documentation, subjectivity issues, etc.
- Questions about the system development (costs, what has been achieved so far, quality culture at SCB, how does this affect the daily work of statistics production, etc.)
- Is there any concrete plan for the future (continuity plan needed)
- How to summarize statistical information more exactly.
- Discussant's recommendations, visually and briefly:
  - Make the quality issue interesting
  - Develop weighting for the users' satisfaction by: user segmentation and critical quality issues. Concerns about the product quality and user needs.
  - How is the total score used with other performance indicators in target settings?

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Comments
- Ambitious work
- The question was raised about the possibility to use the method in other areas (since the method is developed mostly for survey statistics).
- How does the method differ from previous quality work at SCB, i e "genomlysningar". The new approach needs more interpretation and explanation.
- Side-effects:
  - If you use the same evaluators during several years it is likely that they will not detect the differences. They usually detect the same deficiencies and the same improvements.
  - If you measure the same thing the people will focus on this and neglect the other aspects. One suggestion is to change times of evaluation.
- Impressive work but challenging: how to continue since it is very expensive? How much do we gain from external evaluators?
- Terminology suggestion: questionable whether the quality indicator is a good term. It is more appropriate to use some other term such as evaluation of a quality effect or similar.
- One important issue: we do not know how the users perceive the quality issues. Most users really rely on the producers and take the quality for granted.
- Any plans to export the model to the other countries? Suggestion: encourage to share the framework. For example tailored for LFS which is done similarly across countries, good for comparisons.

Some responses (SCB)
- The purpose: to improve product quality and set clearer goals. A good model for improvement that can be used by product managers.
- On questions about involving other people: we believe that we do that, people in the products appreciate talking with the experts. The work will be continued including the other people at Statistics Sweden; plans for testing and informing.
- We are trying to set standards but for the majority of products it is not enough with the standards even if they are at a good level.
- This is a systematic way to get knowledge about the strength and weaknesses.
- "Genomlysning" was good, but did not set a standard and could not be used for comparison.


**Coding at SCB and Brå (Brottsförebyggande rådet)**

*Speaker*: Anton Färnström, Jörgen Svensson
*Discussant:* Lars Lyberg

*Discussion*
Some points made during the discussion:
- The problem with quality assurance and quality control in coding is rising
- Can co-listening in interviews assist in the quality control of coding? Will be evaluated at SCB. When you analyse the tapes from the interviews it is important

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to think about what was not asked.To acknowledge that we have error-levels in our statistics may give us a better quality of statistics.

- Need for training of a broader base of coding experts
- Need for training the coders in error structure, best practices, collection of paradata.
- Error patterns at Brå are similar compared tio 40 years ago, cannot be explained by an increased number of codes
- Communicate with the users the inherent problem of using registers. Not exact figures but often interpreted as such by users. High demand on detailed figures..
- Regional differences with decentralized coding by county police officers. Centralized coding is better for quality.
- Suggestions
    o Look at this problem as a statistical problem: take a sample and obtain good estimates. Don't try to produce statistics if it is based on wrong assumptions
- Crime statistics is a part of official statistics—there should be a certain level of quality; basically the problem of small area statistics applied to registries.
- Use small area methods to produce detailed statistics at a low level? I e modelling approach. Would give estimates of uncertainty.
- SCB's comments
    o 10 years ago LFS left automatic coding and replaced it with interviews.
    o Non-response problem has been increasing.
    o Adjust estimates using sample verification
- Board's Suggestion:
    o Transform systematic error to the variance- not getting statistics worse but making it interpretable.

Stefan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for participating.