

REGISTER-BASED STATISTICS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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In August 2016, experts from the Czech Statistical office (CZSO) made a study visit to Statistics Netherlands to attend a course on 'Using Registers and Administrative Data in the Census'. The study visit was organised as part of the grant project 'Improvement of the Use of Administrative Sources' (ESS. VIP ADMIN WP6 Pilot studies and applications).

Using registers and administrative data in the census has a long-standing tradition in Netherlands. The last traditional enumeration in the Netherlands was conducted in 1971. Until then, traditional censuses had been performed since 1829 by the Ministry of Home Affairs and later since 1899 by Statistics Netherlands. Due to the unwillingness of respondents to take part in censuses (non-response) and due to the need to reduce the costs traditional censuses were stopped after the 1971 census. Statistics Netherlands now conducts a register-based census and uses data already available to Statistics Netherlands, thus placing no burden on individuals. For the 2011 Census, Statistics Netherlands compiled required census tables by combining existing register data with sample survey data.

There are thirteen basic registers in the Netherlands, eleven of them are functioning and filled with data. The Minister of the Interior is responsible for the system of basic registration and cabinet ministers are responsible for each basic registers. For instance, the Minister of the Interior is responsible for the Population Register, the Minister of Infrastructure and the Environment is responsible for Addresses and Buildings, Real Estate, topography, Motor Cars, and Subsoil, and the Minister of Social Affairs for Labour. The registers are managed by municipalities (e.g. the Population Register), the central government organisations, and the Chamber of Commerce. Data are always kept in only one register – for example, an address is recorded in the Basic Register of Addresses and other registers refer to it. Use of basic register da-

ta is compulsory for all governmental organisations. Organisations are not allowed to ask inhabitants about the data included in the basic registers, such as their birth date or address. Users are obliged to notify the basic registers with alternative data that are considered to be better. Therefore, all users of the system contribute to the quality of the data.

All objects in the basic registers (persons, enterprises, addresses etc.) have a unique pin (key). The basic registers are linked to one other through pins. This means that the statistical data are coherent.

Each basic register has its own project board which operates within the legal framework and sees to it that the register data meet legal requirements and that the data are correctly applied. The project board meets 4–6 times a year.

Statistics based on the basic registers, including the population and housing census, need a limited amount of data editing. The register-based census has a much lower, almost zero level non-response rate, unlike traditional enumeration. Users can rely on the validity of these statistics. Statistics production based on register data is usually faster and cheaper. On the other hand, the costs to set up separate registers are high. Compared to traditional census data, the data in basic registers do not always apply to the same point in time. Some data are also delayed, such as income of self-employed persons.

In the Netherlands, unlike the Czech Republic, all essential data are included in the registers. The biggest problem in the Czech Republic is the absence of a register of dwellings, which makes a census without field enumeration impossible. Statistics Netherlands is entitled to use all register data for official statistics, register holders do not question their needs to use the data. The data in the Dutch basic registers, especially the population register, are regularly/easily updated. On top of that, the public and the authorities have more respect for their own legal responsibilities. That is why the quality of Dutch registers is generally very high.