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Statistical basis and overviews

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FSO register strategy

Purpose, strategic objectives
and implementation steps



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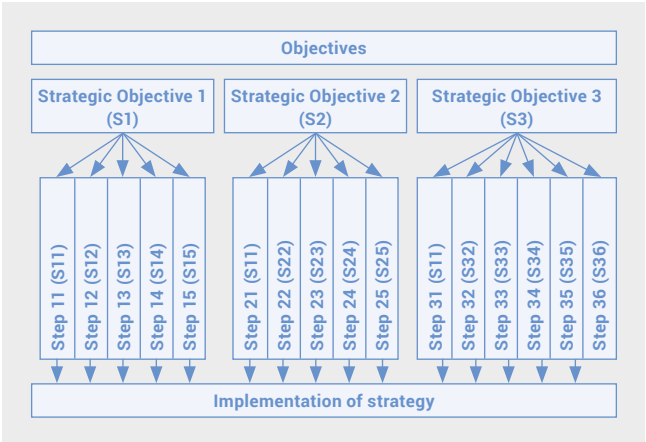
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Register strategy structure



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Objectives

The overall strategic objectives are as follows:

- reduce production costs by increased use of register data
- lighten the load of persons interviewed
- produce statistics more quickly and frequently
- improve conditions for data analysis
- harmonise sources to ensure comparability of results from different surveys
- ensure long-term use of data

Strategic objective 1

The FSO gives preference to register data

Data contained in registers are particularly suited to statistical purposes as their collection can usually be automated. The sending of reminders and most plausibility checks are carried out by the data collection services, reducing the FSO's input considerably. Data are prepared more quickly. Results can be published faster and at shorter intervals, while at the same time saving resources.

A register's structure tends to remain the same over a fairly long period of time. The information it contains can therefore usually be used for several years with the same infrastructure. The investments made by the FSO pay for themselves in the long-term, having created a tool that can be used for years. In many cases, survey quality improves thanks to the wide coverage offered by registers.

Interviewed persons have a lesser load. Direct surveys are conducted less often and the questionnaires of those surveys that remain are shorter.

Steps

S11 Registers form the basis for statistical production

The collection and management of data, sampling and extrapolation of results is based as far as possible on registers. Those in charge of surveys coordinate their sources and ensure that their content is harmonised. This leads to a reduction in the resources used for data collection and better comparability of the results from different statistics.

S12 Direct surveys are conducted only if the data required cannot be found in registers

Whenever possible, the FSO collects the data it needs from registers. Direct surveys are only carried out if

- the desired data are not available in any register and data of sufficient quality cannot be obtained indirectly by making use of other information;
- register data will not be available in time to produce statistical results for a reasonable deadline;
- it is too expensive to use registers.

Each project for statistics based on a direct survey must contain documents indicating which registers were considered and examined as well as the reasons for their rejection.

Each direct survey will be regularly assessed to see whether it can be replaced by a register-based survey.

S13 If necessary, the FSO keeps its own registers

In principle, the FSO uses external registers but in certain cases, it is advisable for the FSO to create and run its own registers, in particular

- when the data come from different sources and are needed for several surveys at different times. The collection and preparation of data from various sources is usually a very time-consuming task and not one that each section of the FSO should be carrying out on a regular basis;
- when the FSO has an official mandate to manage a certain register.

The workload involved in running an FSO register depends on the number of units and characteristics it contains, on the frequency with which these characteristics are updated and on the number of sources used. For this reason, each case must be studied separately with regard to the suitability of keeping an FSO register.

S14 FSO registers are coordinated

The same characteristics must not be given different definitions in FSO registers. Should this occur, those in charge of the registers and users must find a compromise.

At the FSO, a current and valid version exists for each set of classifications. These versions are used for all FSO registers. Any changes made to a classification are also made in the registers. Such changes, however, should be discussed in a timely manner with the users concerned.

To meet statistical requirements, it must be possible to combine FSO registers with one another while observing data protection provisions. The management of identifiers must ensure such combinations.

The inclusion of superfluous data in several registers should be avoided as this can lead to information with different or even contradictory content. For this reason, those in charge of registers must decide who is responsible for updating information and how the other registers should be updated. This information does not include identifiers, technical variables (e.g. change date) and characteristics that are defined differently in various registers.

The persons in charge of FSO registers shall meet regularly to exchange information and to coordinate their activities.

S15 The FSO follows the development of register use with the help of management tools

The FSO needs tools enabling it to monitor the development of internal register use. These tools can also be used to prioritise projects, to allocate resources rationally and to take appropriate action.

Strategic objective 2

The FSO actively contributes to the creation of conditions outside the FSO encouraging the use of registers

Register-based statistics can only be carried out if the necessary framework exists. Rather than taking unilateral steps, the FSO should, therefore, influence conditions to its advantage by favouring collaboration between partners. Such influence starts with communication but can go as far as the drafting of new legal bases.


Efforts towards the harmonisation of external registers are an essential task in creating favourable conditions. In particular these include harmonising characteristics, identifiers and definitions as well as encouraging the use of the same classifications. Harmonisation will simplify and speed up statistical production and reduce the workload involved. It will also improve the comparability of information from different registers, and, most importantly for the FSO, the comparability of statistics on the same topic garnered from different sources. Furthermore, it will facilitate the exchange of data between registers, an improvement of particular relevance for administrative registers.

Steps

S21 The FSO keeps in contact with the authorities responsible for registers

The FSO appoints a service to ensure regular contact with the authority responsible for each register. This service coordinates all activities related to this register on behalf of the office and knows the spokespersons of the authority concerned. It obtains regular information on the state of the register, on any changes made to it as well as on projects related to it. It also has the necessary meta-information. The service must be consulted by the other sections wishing to make direct contact with the authority responsible for the register.

With regard to the persons responsible for external registers, a body led by the FSO should be set up to bring together those persons responsible for large federal registers and possibly other administrative or even private registers. This body would be tasked with encouraging collaboration between the authorities responsible for registers,



to make headway with harmonisation and to make statistical needs better understood. It would enable participants to exchange information and experiences.

At management level, the FSO holds regular meetings with the services managing registers that are important from a statistical point of view.


S22 The FSO has an influence on external registers

The data contained in the registers must meet statistical requirements in terms of content, quality, scope and topicality if they are to be used efficiently. It is also important that characteristics are harmonised. In order to achieve these objectives, the FSO must influence the development of crucial registers using appropriate means. Depending on the priority given to the register, this influence can range from personal contacts (S21) to changes in the legal bases (S24) or the development of optional standards.

In accordance with the Ordinance on the Organisation of Federal Statistics, the FSO must be consulted prior to changes being made to data collections or to registers. This rule should be strictly observed and implemented so that there is sufficient time to react to any changes.

S23 The FSO makes known its policy on register use

The FSO must communicate openly about its activities related to the use of registers. It should highlight the advantages of these data sources and make known the steps it takes with regard to data protection. Good external communication helps politicians, the general public and the authorities responsible for registers to better understand the use of registers for statistical purposes. Relevant measures are adapted to the general orientation of the office's external communication.



S24 If necessary, the FSO adapts the existing legal bases or creates new ones

It may be necessary to adapt or create legal bases to use administrative data or conduct data matching. However, this option implies a great deal of work.

S25 The FSO uses new information and communication technology

New technologies should be used to communicate with external registers and the management of internal registers. These technologies should ensure efficient data transfer, reduce the data collection burden on the FSO and persons responsible for external registers and improve data protection and security. The FSO also uses these technologies to manage its own registers.

It supports the federal administration's efforts towards the harmonisation and use of administrative data (e.g. cyber administration).

Strategic objective 3

The FSO shall optimise its internal processes in order to develop a register-based statistics system.

Optimal conditions should be created internally as well to develop a register-based statistics system. The organisation, processes and management of registers are three areas particularly concerned:

In the area of organisation, we must

- give the sections the support they need,
- coordinate the use of registers and
- introduce indicators to measure the progress of register use in the office.

The processes for data collection and processing shall be made as simple and fast as possible. Duplicates shall be deleted and solutions that are not completely satisfactory abolished. Furthermore, surveys will be conducted by using standardised databases in order to ensure comparability between different statistics.


Internal registers will be aligned so that they can be combined, do not contain any contradictory information and can be harmonised.

The possibilities of using registers are to a large extent limited by data protection provisions. But these provisions often allow room for manoeuvre which should be taken advantage of to satisfy current statistical needs.

Steps

S31 The FSO coordinates and encourages the use of registers

A great amount of coordination between the different surveys is necessary to use registers efficiently. This coordination starts with looking for relevant sources, but it also includes the use of these sources and the collection and processing of data.



To ensure such coordination at the FSO, a service should be appointed to take care of this task. This service should also help the sections look for registers and assist in establishing the cooperation necessary once an appropriate register has been found.

As the FSO has been working with data from registers for a long time, it already has much know-how in this area. But this knowledge is unevenly distributed within the office and should now be pooled and made accessible to everyone.

S32 The FSO creates a register directory

Knowledge about the different registers being kept in Switzerland must be centralised and made available. To this end the FSO keeps a register directory which contains the necessary information on the most important registers for statistics or those that are likely to become important. It also contains indications about their current use at the FSO.


The information in this directory is available to all sections interested and is constantly updated. The directory is a useful tool for researching data sources and for coordinating the use of registers and managing them. Furthermore it indicates whether a collection of data can be considered to be a register in the sense of the current strategy.

S33 The FSO communicates its register strategy internally

FSO employees are aware of the objectives of the register strategy as well as of the steps defined to achieve these objectives. By using the appropriate internal communication channels, all employees concerned know what their task is within the strategy framework and where they can go if they have questions.

S34 The FSO shall develop its own registers in line with needs

The FSO registers provide a service for the production of statistics. They are intended to supply information when it is needed and in sufficient quantity.



Sections which have new requirements are asked to let the persons in charge of the internal registers concerned know sufficiently in advance. The persons in charge define what is possible in collaboration with users. Generally speaking, they take care of the transfer of data, of their integration in the register and ensure that data is regularly updated. If the data have to be processed and transformed, the users and the persons in charge of the registers shall agree on the division of tasks.

Basic services are defined for each register. They are supplied by the section responsible for management of the register. If the users need additional services that are not mentioned in the basic catalogue, they have to provide the resources for these services. The volume of basic services has to be reviewed regularly.

The quality of and necessity for each register as a whole and its contents should also be regularly reviewed and any changes necessary made.

Internal registers in principle contain only information


- which users need regularly or
- which are stipulated in a legal base or
- which are used to manage the register efficiently.

S35 The FSO organises the access to its registers as well as the archiving of recorded data

Each person responsible for an internal register ensures that data protection and security are respected. In this regard they know at all times who has access to which data.

The data contained in the internal registers are archived at least once a year so they can be logged and used for longitudinal analyses. The long-term storage of the data must be guaranteed.

In principle, internal registers are only used for statistical purposes. They can only be used for administrative tasks if this is provided for in specific legal bases.



S36 The FSO ensures register quality

The quality of a survey depends on the quality of its data sources. For this reason the FSO must know about the quality of data contained in the registers, both internal and external. To check the quality of these data, guidelines should be established as well as checklists for the FSO.

Summary

S1 The FSO gives preference to register data

- S11 Registers form the basis for statistical production
- S12 Direct surveys are conducted only if the data required cannot be found in registers
- S13 If necessary, the FSO keeps its own registers
- S14 FSO registers are coordinated
- S15 The FSO follows the development of register use with the help of management tools

S2 The FSO actively contributes to the creation of conditions encouraging the use of registers

- S21 The FSO keeps in contact with the authorities responsible for registers
- S22 The FSO has an influence on external registers
- S23 The FSO makes known its policy on register use
- S24 If necessary, the FSO adapts the existing legal bases or creates new ones
- M25 The FSO uses new information and communication technology.

S3 The FSO shall optimise its internal processes in order to develop a register-based statistics system

- S31 The FSO coordinates and encourages the use of registers
- S32 The FSO creates a register directory
- S33 The FSO communicates its register strategy internally
- S34 The FSO will develop its own registers in line with needs
- S35 The FSO organises the access to its registers as well as the archiving of recorded data
- S36 The FSO ensures register quality

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