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Task Force on Statistical Units

Criteria for choosing the relevant statistical units

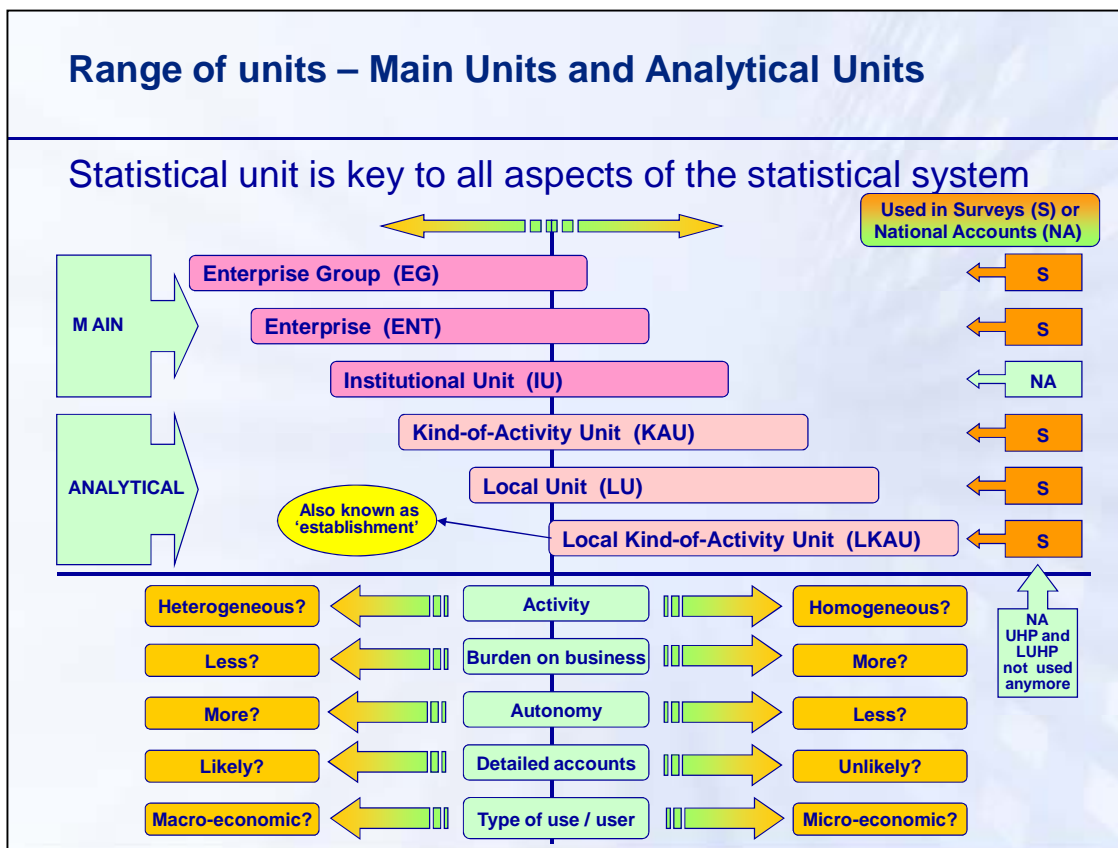
Annex Criteria for choosing the relevant statistical units

- (a) The choice of the statistical unit is key to all aspects of the statistical system.
- (b) The choice of the statistical unit in all the statistical domains will need to reflect a range of criteria to ensure consistency, coherency and comparability as well as the aims of the domain. For example, these aspects are critical to the estimates of “productivity” which bring together data from different statistical domains producing business statistics. The same approach applies to the production of National Accounts and Regional Accounts.
- (c) The choice and the structure of the statistical unit will be key to various aspects of the business register population and sample frame, examples include:
- Classification by type of activity, e.g. use of NACE rules.
 - Classification by region, e.g. use of NUTS rules.
 - Classification by employment size bands.
 - Completeness (exhaustiveness) and coverage.
 - Allocation by type of legal status, preferably by type of institutional sector or a clear link to the institutional sector.
 - Consistency over time.
- (d) Which business data can be collected will depend on the choice of the statistical unit.
- (e) Depending upon the choice of the statistical unit, various criteria may or may not be able to be met. Examples of the type of criteria to consider:
- Type of activity about which data are being sought.
 - Burden on business.
 - Autonomy of the business.
 - Type of use of data.
 - User needs.
 - Ultimately, the availability of the data and can it be collected.

Based on the above criteria, each statistical unit will:

- have limitations;
- determine what data may be collected; and
- determine the relevance of the data collected.

An overview of the units and these criteria is shown in the diagram below.



(f) Following on from the characteristics of (c), (d) and (e), the same statistical unit should be applied throughout a specific statistical domain thereby increasing consistency and comparability.

(g) The same statistical unit should be considered as far as practically possible across the different but relevant statistical domains. Ideally, the same statistical unit should be used across all statistical domains. However, this approach has limitations, for example it may increase consistency and coherency but may reduce the relevance of the data. This can be illustrated with the different needs of micro data (e.g. regional) and of macro data (e.g. national) which may not be fully met, or possible, with the same statistical unit.

(h) Although the institutional unit (which is another statistical unit) is out of scope for the guiding principles, it should be noted that clear links between the statistical units (and the legal units) used in the context of business registers and business statistics to the institutional unit should be considered.