

# Response Burden I: What is burden and why should we care?

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*“In most countries in which a national statistical agency carries out periodically recurring economic surveys, businesses and institutions are said to be becoming increasingly restive under the growing burden of response.”*

(XYZ, YEAR)

# Outline



# Why do businesses complain about official surveys?

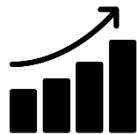


# A different working environment

Business working time ... more precious:



Global competition

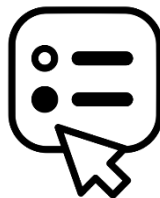


Pressures on productivity



Elimination of any “waste” activity

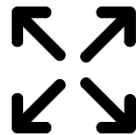
Complete a survey?



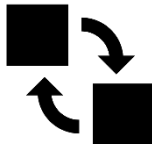
Really?!?



# Businesses question the need to provide data



Growing demand for data



Alternative data sources



Survey usefulness?!?



# What is response burden (RB) and why should we care?





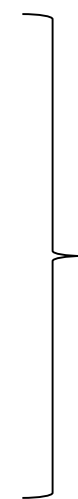
# The burden concept



Time needed for a response



Costs of responding



**Actual RB**



# The burden concept



Feeling related to response



**Perceived RB**



**Time Burden**



**Cognitive Burden**



# So what?



## Political reasons

- part of administrative burden
- unproductive engagement of resources
- total actual RB at the national level



## Methodological reasons

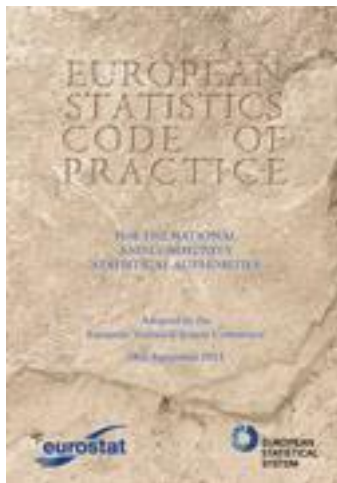
- potentially problematic survey behaviour
- actual and perceived RB at the survey level



## Strategic reasons

- business community as a key stakeholder
- RB at the organisational level

# European Statistics Code of Practice

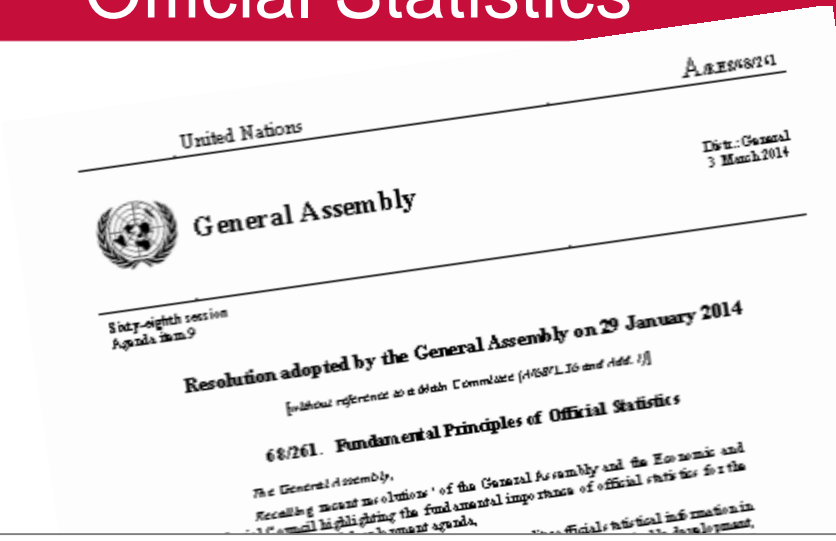


## Principle 9: Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents

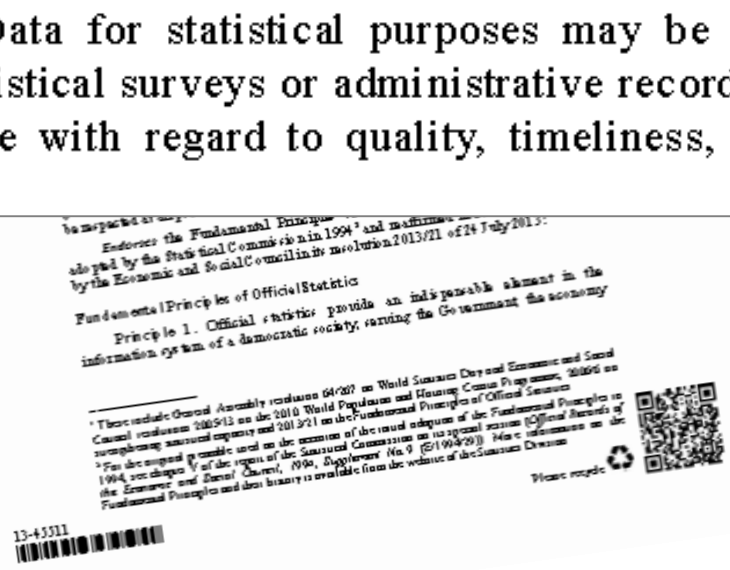
The reporting burden is **proportionate to the needs** of the users and is **not excessive** for respondents. The statistical authorities **monitor** the response burden and set **targets for its reduction** over time.



# UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics



**Principle 5.** Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.



# What are root causes of business burden and complaints?



Do you ever count stairs when  
you walk?

Yes

No

How many messages did you  
receive yesterday?



# Survey questionnaire: business vs. individual



**G Specificaties bedrijfsopbrengsten**

bedragen in 1000 euro

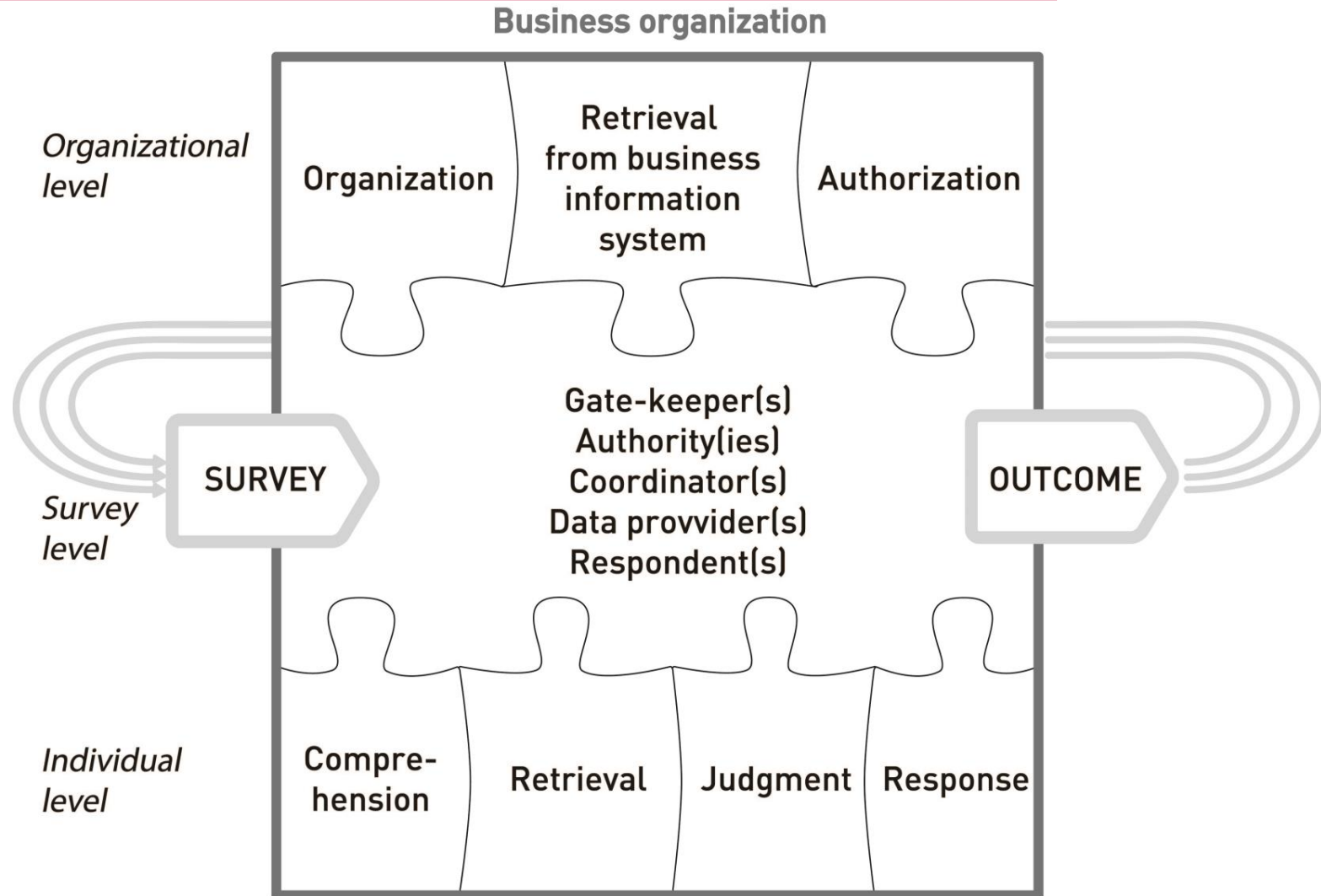
- Netto omzet uit de hoofdactiviteit van de onderneming naar artikelgroepen
- << G.1 Detailhandel in:
    - Kruidenierswaren
    - Zuivel en ~~erzen~~
    - Kaas
    - Aardappelen, groenten en fruit
    - Wild en gevogelte
    - Vlees
    - Vleeswaren en salades
    - Vis, schaal- en schelpdieren
    - Brood en gebak
    - ~~Chocolade, suikervark, snoepgoed e.d.~~ *dispensier*
    - ~~Maaltijden~~
    - ~~Dierenvoeding~~
    - ~~Alcoholhoudende dranken~~
    - ~~Alcoholvrije dranken~~
    - Tabaksproducten en rokersbenodigdheden
    - ~~Dieet- en reformartikelen~~

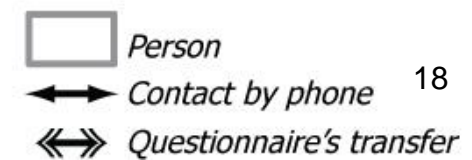
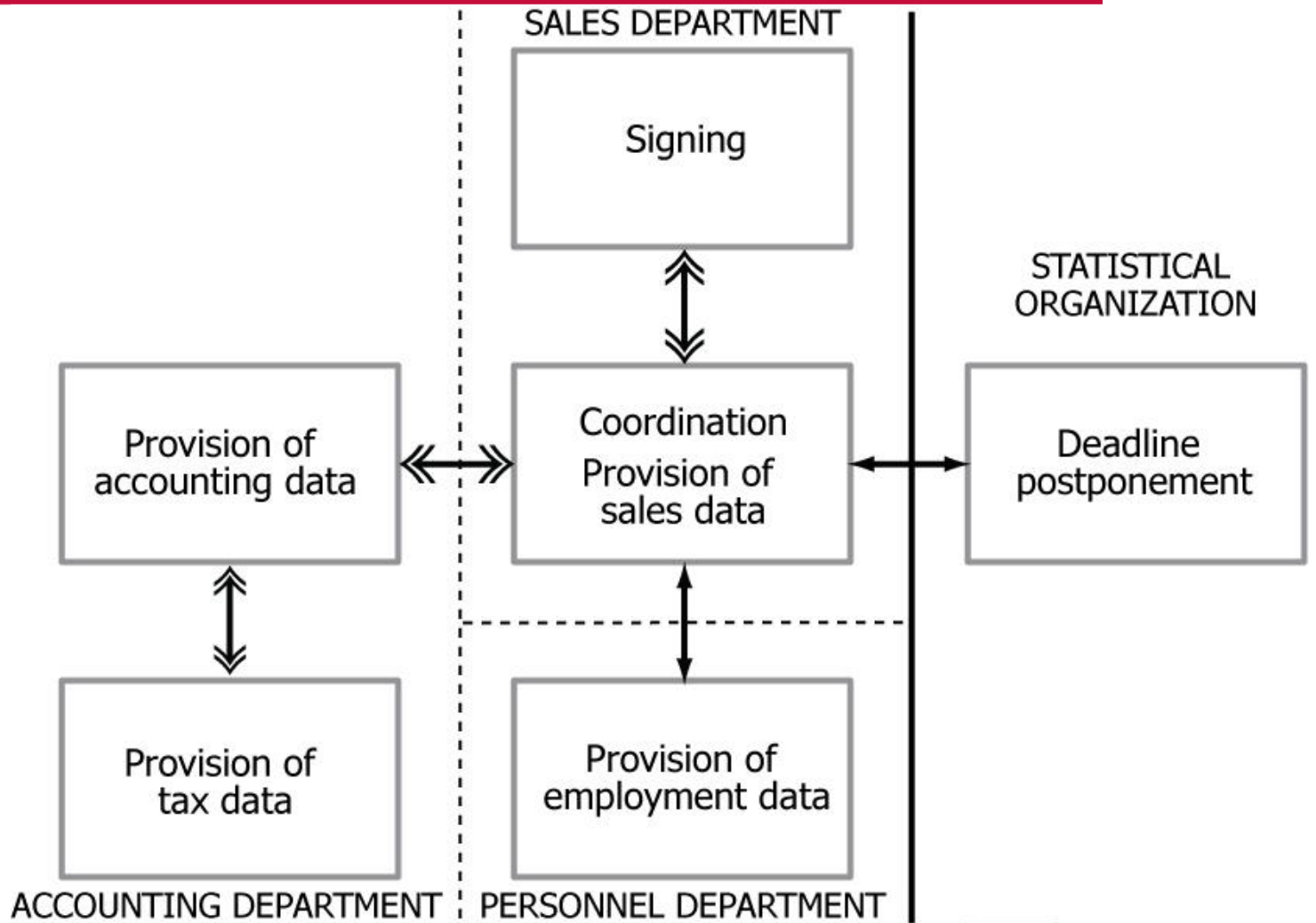
4516	4050
<del>577</del>	503
118	300
778	706
<del>677</del>	
671	633
643	607
37	32
157	737
322	309
635	



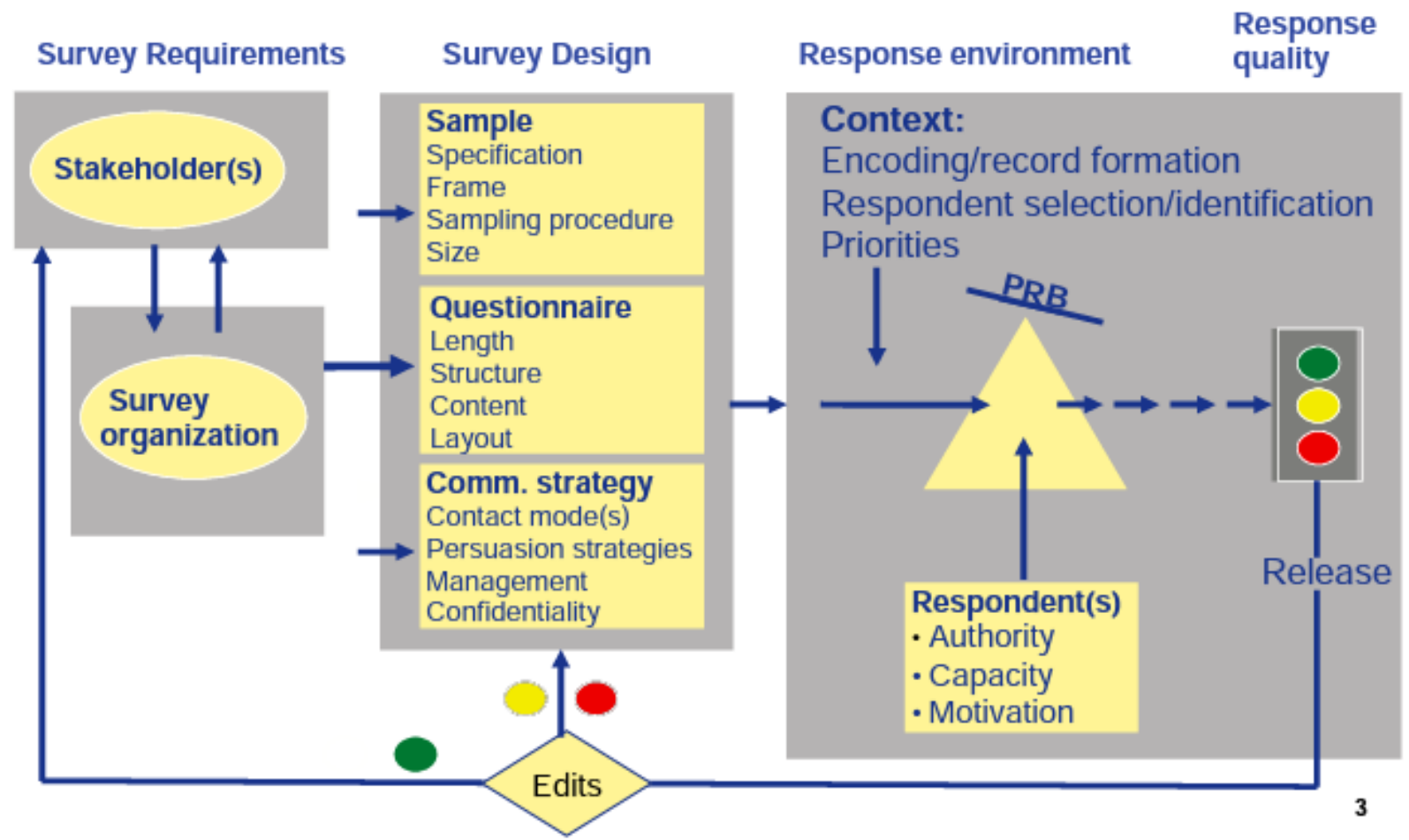


# Business survey response model





# Total business survey burden model



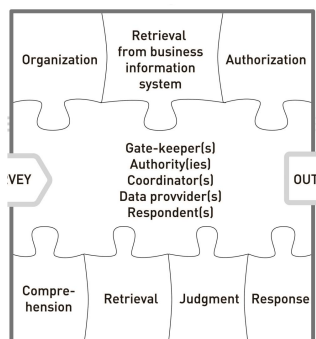
# How to measure response burden (RB)?



# The concept operationalization

Gate-keeper(s)  
Authority(ies)  
Coordinator(s)  
Data provider(s)  
Respondent(s)

Whose tasks in the response process?



Which tasks of the response process?

- activities beyond questionnaire's completion
- initial one-off activities
- nonresponse activities & non-response



What about benefits of responding?

# The concept operationalization: Willeboordse



Willeboordse (1997) distinguishes 4 RB dimensions:

- Objective (=actual) vs. Subjective (=perceived)
- Gross vs. Net
- Minimalistic vs. Maximalistic
- Imposed vs. Accepted



# The concept operationalization: Standard Cost Model



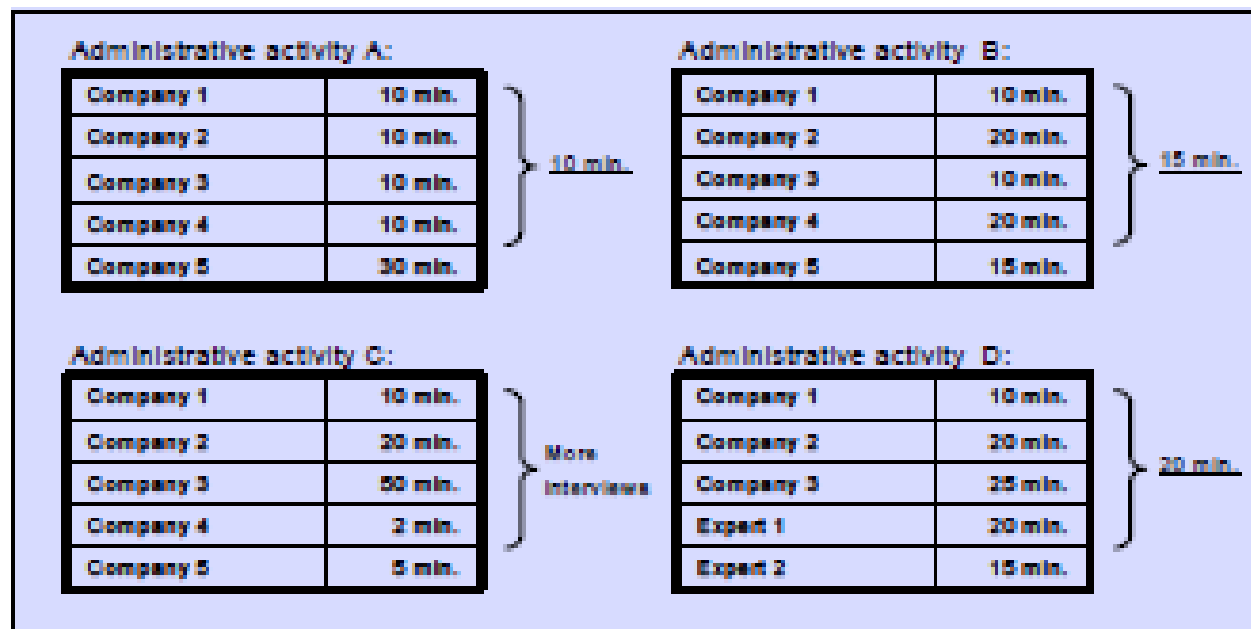
Burden: actual RB expressed as costs

Tasks:

- list of 16 activities
- initial one-off activities
- full vs. actual compliance

# The concept operationalization: Standard Cost Model

Figure 5: Identifying the normally efficient business





# Collection of burden data

- **Source of data:**
  - survey participants
  - experts (in-house, business associations)
- **Timing and mode:**
  - as part of the survey
  - separately, after the survey
- **Coverage:**
  - all surveyed units
  - a representative subsample
  - a qualitative subsample
- **Frequency**

# Actual RB calculation



Time:

$$R * T$$



Costs:

$$R * T * C$$

R = number of respondents

T = (average) time spent

C = (average) hourly cost of respondent time

# How do NSIs measure burden?

## BLUE-ETS survey

Team lead by Deirdre Giesen (Statistics Netherlands).

Survey completed in 2011.

Response from 41 out of 45 NSIs in 39 out of 43 countries.

Survey topics: burden measurement and reduction practices.

# How do NSIs measure burden?

- **Concept measured**
  - actual RB 34 NSIs
  - perceived RB 12 NSIs
- **Indicator of actual RB:**
  - time burden 16 NSIs
  - time + money 16 NSIs
- **Treatment of nonresponding units:**
  - imposed 13 NSIs
  - accepted 11 NSIs
- **Source of data:**
  - survey participants 29 NSIs
  - experts 25 NSIs
- **Coverage (& timing):**
  - all surveyed units 21 NSIs
  - a representative subsample 14 NSIs
  - a qualitative subsample 13 NSIs

# Inconsistent inclusion of tasks

Tasks explicitly included in actual RB	Yes	No	Don't know
Filling in the questionnaire.	31	1	1
Retrieving, collecting, and compiling the information requested.	28	4	1
Reading questions and instructions.	25	6	2
Administrative tasks (e.g., coordination) involved in survey completion.	18	10	5
Record formation specifically done for reporting obligations.	16	12	5
Recontacts with businesses about the data provided.	13	16	4
Other sources of response burden.	3	18	12

# Questions on actual RB



- How much time did you spend collecting relevant information before the questionnaire could be completed?

- How much time did you spend completing the questionnaire?

\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_ minutes

- Did other people help ... ?  
How many ... ?  
How much time ...?

**Check the complete version!**

## Other questions



# Two main questions on perceived RB

- Did you think it was quick or time-consuming to collect information to complete the questionnaire?

very quick

quite quick

neither/nor

quite time-consuming

very time-consuming



- Did you find it easy or burdensome to fill in the questionnaire?

very easy

quite easy

neither/nor

quite burdensome

very burdensome



Source: Dale & Haraldsen, 2007. Icons by Gregor Črešnar from Noun Project

# Explanatory questions on perceived RB



- Why did you find it time-consuming?  
information from different sources  
help from others  
wait for information  
other
- What conditions contributed to making the questionnaire burdensome to fill in?  
too many questions  
messy layout  
unclear terms  
complicated or lengthy calculations  
information mismatch  
response alternatives  
other

***Check the complete version!***





# Questions on perceived benefits / motivation



- Do you consider the statistics from this questionnaire are useful or useless for your business?

very useful

fairly useful

neither/nor

fairly useless

very useless

- Do you consider the statistics from this questionnaire are useful or useless for society?

very useful

fairly useful

neither/nor

fairly useless

very useless



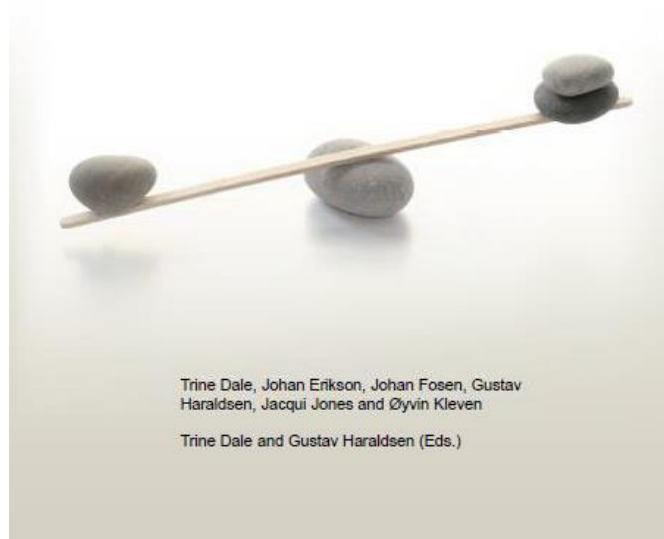
# Further reading



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
EUROSTAT



## Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating Business Survey Response Burdens

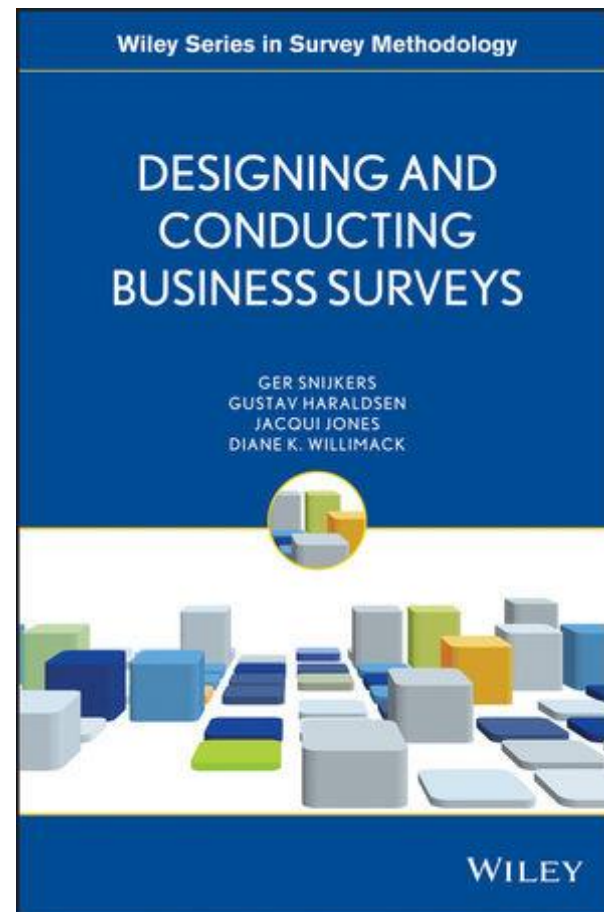


Trine Dale, Johan Erikson, Johan Fosen, Gustav Haraldsen, Jacqui Jones and Øyvind Kleven

Trine Dale and Gustav Haraldsen (Eds.)



Dale & Haraldsen, 2007



Haraldsen et al., 2013

# *Gustav Haraldsen* Statistics Norway



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