

# Report on sector review of the Business statistics in Belarus

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## List of abbreviations

AGA	Adapted Global Assessment
BR	Business Register
BS	Business Statistics
CPA	Statistical classification of products by activity in the European Economic Community
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CV	Coefficient of Variation
ESCoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IISSS	Integrated Information System of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus
IPI	Industrial Production Index
KAU	Kind-of-Activity-Unit
NA	National Accounts
NACE	Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OKED	National Classification of Economic Activities
OKP	National classification of products by activity
OKPO	Statistical Unit Identification Code
PIN	Payer's Identification Number
SAQ	Self-Assessment Questionnaire
SBR	Statistical Business Register
SBS	Structural Business Statistics
SOATO	National classification System of designation of administrative-territorial units and localities
SR	Sector Review
STS	Short-Term Statistics
VAT	Value Added Taxes

## Preface

1. The Sector Review (SR) of business statistics (BS) in Belarus was implemented within the framework of the Eurostat-funded project '*Assessment of the statistical systems and selected statistical areas of the enlargement and ENP countries*'. ICON-INSTITUT in consortium with DevStat, contracted by Eurostat (no. 14472.2013.002-2013.694), organised all activities and tasks related to the SR. Eurostat initiated the SR following a request by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter Belstat).
2. The assessment covered two domains of business statistics: structural business statistics (SBS) and short-term statistics (STS).
3. Two experts conducted the SR: Ms Violeta Kunigeliene (leading expert) and Ms Virginia Balea (supporting expert).
4. Prior to the mission, Belstat staff completed a self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) assessing how well BS in Belarus comply with the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP) and with specific EU Regulations for BS. Responses to the SAQ served as the starting point for the review, which took place in Minsk from 29 June to 2 July 2015.
5. The SAQ covered the following aspects: institutional environment, statistical processes, statistical outputs and future planning.
6. The review findings are the result of the analysis of documents provided by Belstat, documents available on the Belstat website, and information collected and discussed during the in-country mission.
7. Discussions supplemented the information provided in the SAQ. Belstat provided additional documents in paper format during the in-country mission.
8. The collaboration between the review experts and the Belstat team was constructive throughout all phases of the SR.

## Executive summary

9. The Sector Review was tailored to Belstat's needs. The aim of the SR was to align Belarusian business statistics with European and international standards. The SR covered structural business statistics and short-term statistics.
10. The main goals of the SR were as follows:
  - to assess the administrative and technical capacity of the National Statistical System (NSS) of Belarus to produce SBS and STS;
  - to assess the level of compliance with EU requirements;
  - to assess the statistical production of SBS and STS;
  - to propose a list of recommendations to improve the BS production process.
11. The review was based on the information collected and the discussions held during the mission.
12. The Belarusian statistical business register (SBR) was established in 1999. In 2013, the SBR was redesigned to include two parts: administrative and statistical. The administrative part covers legal units and related information (identification code, name and address, location, ownership, main activity code of the legal unit and other). The statistical part covers the statistical units, information for statistical purposes and elements used for their identification (statistical code, main activity, secondary activity, type of organisation and other). The SBR contains also economic variables (employment, value of production and revenue). The statistical units covered by the SBR are enterprises, asset holders and local units. The assets holders are similar to local units, the main difference to the definition of local unit is that each of the asset holders draws up a balance sheet. Asset holders are part of an enterprise, and they keep a full set of accounts. Asset holders are not legal entities, and they are registered with the tax authority only for taxation purposes. Records for local units are created as a rule by location and in some cases by economic activity. Local units, asset holders and enterprises are linked via the statistical unit identification code (OKPO). Kind-of-activity units (KAUs) are not included in the SBR.
13. In Belarus, data collection is mandatory, so the response rate is 100% for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and for large enterprises and about 95% for micro-enterprises.
14. In July 2013, the Integrated Information System of State Statistics of the Republic of Belarus (IISSS) was implemented. The system ensures uniform collection and processing of statistical information via the Internet.
15. Belstat's territorial offices collect the data for the SBR using a specially developed IT tool for electronic data collection (forms/questionnaires). Territorial offices also use paper forms/questionnaires, but data editing takes place using the same IT tool as for the electronic replies.
16. The registration authorities and the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Taxation and the State Committee for Property as well as other state authorities and organisations provide Belstat with administrative data to update the SBR. Data from the Ministry of Taxation are also used to produce aggregated data on individual entrepreneurs.
17. Since 2006, an exhaustive annual business survey has gathered data on all categories of enterprises (micro, small, medium and large). In 2014, Belstat changed the methodology

for data collection of micro-enterprises by conducting an annual business survey using random stratified sampling of micro-enterprises (with less than 16 employees). For large and medium enterprises the reporting unit is the legal unit (asset holder)<sup>1</sup>. For micro and small enterprises, the reporting unit is the legal entity (enterprise).

18. For medium and large enterprises, each subject-matter unit at Belstat or the regional statistical offices creates a list of statistical units to be surveyed. For each survey by economic activities, this list comprises statistical units whose main activity is in a specific activity class as well as statistical units whose secondary activity is in the same activity class. (For example, the industry survey covers statistical units whose main activity is industry and statistical units whose main activity is in a different sector but whose secondary activity is industry.) The list of statistical units is drawn from the business register and the list of statistical units for retail trade is completed with specific characteristics from administrative sources.
19. The classification of economic activities is the national version of NACE Rev. 1.1, Types of Economic Activities (OKED).
20. The sample selection method for micro-entities is stratified systematic random sampling. Stratification is based on location and activity grouping.
21. The business register provides the basis for survey sampling and coordination and for grossing up results. For each calendar year, a 'frozen' file of enterprises is prepared.

## **1 Legal and institutional basis**

### **1.1. Mandate for data collection**

22. The legal basis is the Law on State Statistics of Belarus No. 345-3 dated 28 November 2004.
23. Law No. 345-3 on State Statistics establishes the legal framework for collecting, organising, producing and disseminating official statistics in the Republic of Belarus.
24. Information is collected, compiled, analysed, disseminated and stored in accordance with the Statistical Work Programme, prepared by Belstat each year. The current programme is in force throughout 2015. Official Statistics should provide quantitative and representative information to the public, parliament, government, other public authorities, research and academic institutions, the media, and economic, business and social organisations. All information should be published both nationally and internationally. The information should reflect the factual situation in Belarus and be disseminated in an impartial way.
25. Information required to assess the quality of official statistics, particularly on the principles and methods used for producing statistics, is publicly accessible but only in Russian.
26. The assessment covers structural business statistics (SBS) and short-term statistics (STS).
27. At the EU level, SBS is compiled under Parliament and Council Regulation 58/1997 and Council Regulation 295/2008 (and later amendments) on structural business statistics and must comply with the definitions, breakdowns, deadlines for data delivery and quality aspects specified in Implementing Regulations 250/2009 and 251/2009.

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<sup>1</sup> The reporting unit is a separate sub-division of a legal entity that compiles its own balance sheet and covers usually less than an enterprise; a comparison with EU methodology and terminology is not possible.

28. The legal basis for European short-term business statistics is Regulation 1165/98, amended by Regulation 1158/2005, and other Regulations.

### **1.2. Adequacy of resources**

29. According to Belstat's organisational structure, annual BS are the responsibility of the Structural Statistics Unit of the Industrial Statistics Department, the Business Finance Statistics Division of the Finance Statistics Department and the Labour Statistics Department. These three units/divisions employ 25 people in total. Regional statistical offices collect the data. As Belstat organises its BS by sector, other units of the Industrial Statistics Department, the Services and Domestic Trade Statistics Department, and the Investment and Construction Statistics Department produce some annual statistical indicators.

30. Belstat assigns 435 people (including staff in regional statistical offices and IT staff) to the collection, processing and dissemination of BS. The human resources are adequate in terms of number, skills and knowledge.

31. Belstat states that the computing resources and the quality of the computing resources are acceptable for the production of BS.

### **1.3. Commitment to quality**

32. Belstat has developed a general quality policy that could be translated into a specific quality policy for STS or SBS.

33. Belstat has procedures to plan and monitor the quality of statistical production. The Quality Policy of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus defines these procedures. For the quality assessment carried out once every two years for all centralised statistical surveys, quality management arrangements comply with the approved methodology using a ranking method. The methodology reflects how well quality requirements are met at all stages of statistical production.

34. The degree to which quality requirements are met is assessed using a questionnaire (based on DESAP) covering eight quality criteria across seven stages of statistical production.

35. The quality of Belarusian BS is monitored (coefficient of variation), assessed (metadata for indicators) and reported on (quality reports) but does not cover all the quality criteria defined for European Statistics.

36. The methodology of annual surveys is documented.

## **2 Main findings**

### **2.1. General overview**

37. Economic Statistics is dealt with in six departments: Industrial Statistics, Investment and Construction Statistics, Price Statistics, Finance Statistics, Labour Statistics and Service and Domestic Trade Statistics.

38. The Belarusian Business Register (BR) has two parts: an administrative and a statistical part. The administrative part contains all legal units existing in administrative registers (legal entities, separate sub-divisions of legal entities (which either compile (asset holders) or do not compile (local units) their own balance sheet), representative offices of foreign organisations and simple partnerships), while the statistical part contains all units necessary to conduct surveys (enterprises, asset holders and local units). Asset holders are

part of an enterprise, and they keep a full set of accounts. Asset holders are not legal entities, and they are registered with the tax authority only for taxation purposes. Asset holders, local units and enterprises are linked through the statistical unit identification code (OKPO).

39. Since 2006, an exhaustive annual BS survey has collected data on all categories of enterprises (micro, small, medium and large). In 2014, Belstat changed the methodology for data collection of micro-enterprises by conducting an annual business survey using random stratified sampling of micro-enterprises (with less than 16 employees). For micro and small enterprises the statistical unit is the enterprise. For medium and large enterprises, however the statistical unit is the asset holder. In Belarus, the enterprise is usually equivalent to the legal entity.
40. The classification of economic activity is the national version of NACE Rev. 1.1, Types of Economic Activities (OKED).
41. The unit response rate in STS is 100 %. For SBS the response rate is 100% in case of small, medium and large enterprises and about 95% for micro-enterprises.
42. An Integrated Information System of Statistics was created in 2013. The system contains 89 of the 102 questionnaires (forms) used by Belstat to collect data from enterprises in electronic format. Currently, about 90 % of enterprises submit data electronically via this system. Preparatory work to enable online data transmission has begun.
43. Belstat publishes STS data t+16 to t+20 days after the reference period while SBS data are published 7 months after the reference period (July or t+7 months)
44. A publication calendar informs users in advance about publication dates.
45. Survey results are revised after the first data release because respondents provide revised data. A common data revision policy was prepared, documented and adopted by the order of Belstat in December 2015 and specified in the respective methodologies for STS and SBS compilation.
46. Seasonal and working day adjustment for time series is carried out once a year, after the end of the reporting year. Adjusted data are published in statistical books.

## **2.2. Sound methodology**

### **Structural business statistics**

47. Although they generally adhere to EU standards and practices, Belstat's annual BS has some distinctive features such as the statistical unit. In Belarus, the statistical unit for collecting, processing and disseminating annual data for legal entities of 101 employees or more is the asset holder. For micro and small enterprises, the statistical unit is the enterprise.
48. Belstat produces and publishes annual statistics based on survey data collected by the Structural Statistics Unit of the Industrial Statistics Department, Finance Statistics department and Labour Statistics Department as well as sector statistics departments (other units of the Industrial Statistics Department, Investment and Construction Statistics department, Service and Domestic Trade Statistics Department).
49. Annual BS covers the following domains: agriculture, industry, construction, trade and market services. Classification of enterprises by activity uses the Classification of types of Economic Activities (OKED). The new national version (OKED) of NACE Rev. 2 will be implemented in 2016.



50. For medium and large enterprises, each subject-matter unit within Belstat creates a list of statistical units to be surveyed. For each economic sector, this list comprises statistical units whose main activity is in a specific activity class as well as statistical units whose secondary activity is in the same sector. (For example, the industry survey covers statistical units whose main activity is industry and statistical units whose main activity is in a different sector but whose secondary activity is industry.) The list of statistical units is drawn from the business register and is complemented with specific characteristics from administrative sources for retail trade.
51. Data on individual entrepreneurs come from administrative sources.
52. District (rayon) offices collect data on paper forms and perform some of the logical and visual quality verification. Regional offices (oblast) perform data editing and quality checks. Errors in the data are corrected at all levels using feedback from respondents. Belstat staff performs additional quality controls of the data and apply validation procedures.
53. Since 2014 (reference year), data collection for micro-enterprises has been sample based. Neyman allocation is used to calculate the sample size in each stratum. The sample for 2014 covered about 20 % of the micro-enterprise population.
54. The main financial indicators collected by the Business Finance Statistics Division are as follows: revenues from sales of products, goods, works and services; cost of products, goods, works and services sold; profit/loss from sales of products, goods, works and services; profitability of products, goods, works and services sold; profitability of sales; net profit/net loss; and other financial indicators.
55. The questionnaire (forms) addresses annual BS requirements and national accounts requests. Domain surveys are used to gather data on production value, industrial production by type of products, employment, fixed capital investment and turnover (trade and services). Additional variables are collected for each sector:
  - Construction: construction works
  - Trade: number of stores and surface area of store by category
  - Restaurants and bars: number of facilities by category
  - Transport: road freight transport
56. Each subject-matter unit within Belstat decides which sectors of the economy require an infra-annual survey in addition to the regular annual survey.
57. The variables that are collected for SBS purposes are as follows:
  - Number of employees
  - Number of employees in full-time equivalent
  - Hours worked (industry, construction)
  - Personnel costs
  - Social security costs
  - Wages and salaries
  - Value of production (output)
  - Gross profit (margin) from resale (gross trade margin)
  - Total volume of procurement of goods and services
  - Changes in inventories of goods and services

- Changes in inventories of goods and services purchased for resale, without any changes to their state
  - Changes in inventories of finished goods and work-in-progress goods
  - Store surface area
  - Number of retail stores (retail facilities)
  - Investment in purchased software
  - Gross land investment
  - Gross investment in existing buildings and structures
  - Gross investment in building construction and improvements
  - Gross investment in machinery and equipment
  - Purchase of fuel and energy
  - Investment in equipment for pollution monitoring and special anti-pollution accessories (generally mounted at the pipe end)
  - Investment in equipment and plants related to clean technologies (integrated technology)
  - Total current environmental expenditure
58. Turnover is used only for trade activities. For industry and services, value of production is used.
59. Annual BS are published annually at the aggregated level (mainly section level) and by size class on national and regional levels. Size classes differ from those defined at the EU level.
60. The main annual indicators published are as follows:
- Number of entities
  - Number of employees
  - Revenues from sales of products, goods, works and services (proxy for turnover)
  - Nominal gross average monthly wages and salaries
  - Volume of manufacture of products
  - Gross investments
61. Some series as required by the SBS regulation are produced and disseminated, as follows:
- Annex 1. Out of 6 series, the following series can be compiled:
    - 1A Annual enterprise statistics for Services
    - 1B Annual enterprise statistics by size class for Services.
  - Annex 2. Out of 12 series, the following series can be compiled:
    - 2A Annual enterprise statistics for Industry
    - 2B Annual enterprise statistics by size class for Industry
    - 2H Annual enterprise statistics on environmental protection expenditure by environmental domains for industry
    - 2J Multiannual enterprise statistics on environmental protection expenditure by environmental domains for industry.
  - Annex 3. Out of 12 series, the following series can be compiled:
    - 3A Annual enterprise statistics for Distributive Trade

- 3B Annual enterprise statistics by size class for Distributive Trade
  - 3D Annual enterprise statistics by size class of turnover for distributive trades
  - 3E Multiannual enterprise statistics: breakdown of turnover by product type (wholesale and retail trade)
  - 3J Multiannual enterprise statistics Breakdown of turnover by type of activity and number of retail stores for retail trade.
- Annex 4. Out of 9 series, the following series can be compiled:
    - 4A Annual enterprise statistics for Construction
    - 4B Annual enterprise statistics by size class for Construction.

The following series from Annexes 1-4 can be compiled according to the national classification of administrative-territorial units and localities:

- 1C Annual regional statistics for services
  - 2C Annual regional statistics for industry
  - 3C Annual regional statistics for distributive trades
  - 4C Annual regional statistics for construction
62. For the series of data mentioned in paragraph 61, only certain variables and certain breakdowns (NACE and size class) are available. The following aggregates can be calculated and provided: NACE Rev. 1.1 division level and size class: micro (0–15 employees), small (16–100 employees), medium (101–250 employees) and large (250+ employees).
63. Annual BS provide information about individual entrepreneurs registered by the Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Republic of Belarus.
64. Current production and dissemination fails to cover any series in Annexes 5 to 9 (Financial services and business demography).

### **Short-term statistics**

65. The response rate for all STS surveys is 100 %.
66. For Annex A, *Industry*, all variables requested by the EU regulation are collected:
- Production value
  - Turnover from main activity
  - Number of employees
  - Wages and salaries
  - Hours worked.
67. Monthly data from enterprises on production value, production of commodities by type and turnover from the main activity are collected on the fourth day after the reference month. Monthly data on the number of employees, wages and salaries and hours worked are collected on the twelfth day after the reference month. The monthly survey is an exhaustive survey covering all large and medium enterprises (101+ employees) whose main activity is industry. Data are collected for the reporting month, the previous month and the corresponding month of the previous year.
68. The quarterly survey provides data on micro and small enterprises. The sample is based on a threshold. Enterprises with more than BYR 3 billion annual (about 200000 Euro) industrial production value are interviewed. Quarterly data are collected on the 15<sup>th</sup> day after the reference quarter. Data are collected for the reporting quarter and the

corresponding quarter of the previous year. Enterprises provide data on the production of commodities by type and industrial production value.

69. Data on the value of enterprises whose secondary activities are listed in section C, D, E (non-industrial activity) are collected through the quarterly survey.
70. Monthly data on micro and small enterprises and non-industrial enterprises whose secondary activity is 'Industry' are estimated from the last available quarterly survey data.
71. The production index is calculated according to international (UN) recommendations using the Laspeyres index.
72. The production index is published via a press release on the 16<sup>th</sup> day after the reference month and via a monthly bulletin 25 days after the reference month. Data are published month to previous month, month to the same month of the previous year, and from the beginning of the year to the same period of the previous year (e.g. January–May 2015 to January–May 2014).
73. The base year changes every year according to the chain linking method.
74. All data are published at the subsection level (two-digits) by NACE Rev. 1.1. The national version of the NACE Rev. 2 will be introduced as of 01 January 2016 and data will be published at two-digit level. Time series will be recalculated according to the new NACE classification back to 2010.
75. Data on turnover from the main economic activity are published as absolute figures in the monthly bulletin. Data on turnover from the main activity are collected via the monthly questionnaire (form 12-π), but only for large and medium enterprises with their main activity in industry. The quarterly questionnaire (form 4-y) provides data on domestic turnover (the volume of shipped production) of large and medium enterprises with their secondary activity in industry. These data are used for internal analysis only and hence, not published.
76. The methodology on the index of industrial production is available on the website of Belstat while other metadata are currently being prepared.
77. A common revision policy for industry indices exists, is documented and published on the website of Belstat as part of the above mentioned methodology on the index of industrial production. Since monthly and quarterly information is collected early in the process, enterprises are asked within the next survey to update data from the previous month or quarter. Using these data, data for the previous period are updated/ revised.
78. For Annex B, *Construction*, all variables requested by the EU regulation are collected:
  - Production
  - Production of building construction
  - Production of civil engineering
  - Number of employees
  - Wages and salaries
  - Hours worked
  - Building permits: number of dwellings, square metres.
79. There are eight monthly, quarterly and annually questionnaires for collecting data on construction. Three monthly questionnaires provide data to calculate the construction production index. Data in questionnaires are provided in accumulated form. Information

on the production of residential building construction is provided monthly, and information on production of other construction (civil engineering) is provided quarterly. Calculation of the construction production index uses the Laspeyres formula, using the producer price index.

80. Belstat does not collect and publish data on building permits as this is done by another state institution that is responsible for building permits indicators, this institution also provides information to users.
81. A press release on construction indicators (at the section level) is published on the 19th day after the reference month. Monthly bulletins, published on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> day after the reference period, once in a quarter provide data at more detailed breakdowns (5-digit NACE Rev. 1.1 level).
82. All data are published at the section level by NACE Rev. 1.1. The national version of the NACE Rev. 2 will be introduced as of 01 January 2016 and data will be published at the section level. Time series will be recalculated according to the new classification back to 2010.
83. The methodology for calculating the production index is available on the Belstat website. Other metadata are under preparation.
84. Based on the results of annual data compilation, Belstat revises data for construction indicators.
85. The construction producer price index is calculated by aggregating construction cost, material cost and labour cost. The Republican Scientific and Engineering Centre of the Ministry of Building and Architecture is responsible for calculating and disseminating the construction producer price index.
86. For Annex C, *Retail trade*, all variables requested by the EU regulation are collected:
  - Turnover
  - Deflated turnover
  - Number of employees
  - Wages and salaries
  - Hours worked.
87. For domestic trade, Belstat uses common monthly questionnaires (forms) for retail and wholesale trade (Section G) and restaurants (groups 55.3, 55.4, 55.5 of section H). Data are gathered on an accumulated basis.
88. For retail trade, all state enterprises, regardless of their size, are surveyed exhaustively. The BR stores data on the ownership (state/private/etc.) of each trade enterprise. Non-state large and medium enterprises are surveyed exhaustively. For non-state micro and small enterprises, Belstat performs a survey using stratified random sampling to select 10–15 % of all micro and small enterprises. The observation unit is equivalent to the local unit. Respondents submit the monthly questionnaires (forms) for domestic trade on the 3<sup>rd</sup> (for retail trade) and 5<sup>th</sup> (for wholesale trade) day after the reference month.
89. The deflator for retail trade turnover comes from the Price Statistics Department. The deflator is provided for food and non-food consumer goods. Initially, turnover data for food and non-food goods are deflated separately at the regional level. Then, deflated data (data in constant prices) are aggregated at the country level.
90. The press release for retail trade is published on the 18th day after the reference month.

91. For wholesale trade, the survey covers all small, medium and large enterprises whose main activity is wholesale trade. For micro-enterprises, the survey uses sampling. The selection threshold is set in such a way as to cover at least 70 % of total turnover by micro-enterprises. All large and medium enterprises with wholesale as a secondary activity are also surveyed. Every month since 2012, Belstat has calculated the deflator for sales in wholesale trade.
92. The press release on wholesale trade is published on the 18<sup>th</sup> day after the reference month. All data are published at the section level.
93. Methodology on the calculation of indicators on retail and wholesale trade is available in Russian on the Belstat website while other metadata for retail and wholesale trade variables are under preparation.
94. Revisions are carried out after the reference year once enterprises have provided annual data. Deflator for retail trade is based on the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP). From the class level of the HICP it is possible to transform the HICP to NACE Rev.2 and produce a price index by activity.
95. For Annex D, *Other services*, the quarterly and annual questionnaires (forms) cover all variables:
  - Production value
  - Turnover
  - Number of employees
  - Gross wages and salaries
  - Number of enterprises
96. Each quarter, Belstat collects data on business-to-population service enterprises. Enterprises submit quarterly questionnaires (forms) to Belstat 28 days after the reporting quarter. Data are collected from enterprises that provide paid services to the public, regardless of their main activity. The Services Statistics Department keeps a separate list of such enterprises. This list is updated annually. Information on services is collected quarterly and annually. Data are collected by kind of services according to the OKP classification (national version of the CPA 2002). In 2016, Belstat will adopt a new version of CPA 2008 and will publish data at the 2-digit level. It is planned that data on turnover back to 2010 will be recalculated in accordance with the new classification NACE Rev.2. In statistical publications, data are aggregated at the country level. Data appear in absolute and relative terms (volume indices). Consumer price indices are used for deflation.
97. The variable *Turnover by activity at the section level* is calculated using data from the quarterly questionnaire (form 4-y). Data are published in absolute figures. VAT is not included in the turnover on services.
98. Deflator for other services is based on the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP). From the class level of the HICP it is possible to transform the HICP to NACE Rev.2 and produce a price index by activity.

### **2.3. Appropriate statistical procedures**

#### Administrative data

99. The state statistics bodies have the right to receive, as prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Belarus, information from the Single State Register of Legal Entities and

Individual Entrepreneurs and from other registers and databases maintained by government organisations (art. 9, para 1.7 of Statistics Law).

100. Belstat's access to administrative data is regulated by special agreements on data exchange between parties. Belstat has data exchange agreements with 32 government agencies, including the National Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Taxation and Ministry of Justice.
101. Data from registration authorities, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Taxation, the State Property Committee and other state authorities and organisations are used to update the statistical register. Data from the Ministry of Taxation, National Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the State Property Committee are used for finance and service statistics and for aggregating data on individual entrepreneurs.
102. The tax payer's identification number (PIN) is used to link statistical and administrative data.
103. For STS, construction producer prices provided by administrative sources are used to calculate the construction production index.
104. Administrative data is used to assess turnover for individual entrepreneurs.

#### Non-response

105. In Belarus, the response rate is 100 % for small, medium and large enterprises and about 95 % for micro-enterprises.
106. During data collection for micro enterprises, all non-responding enterprises are replaced with other enterprises with the same statistical characteristics. Final weights are adjusted to account for any remaining non-response.

#### Data processing

107. In addition to preliminary checks by staff in the regional offices, Belstat validates data by checking them against data from the previous year or by crosschecking between variables. Statisticians responsible for BS apply logical and mathematical controls at the individual (enterprise) level. When differences and inconsistencies are detected, the enterprises are contacted to verify that the data are correct.

#### Non-excessive burden on respondents

108. In 2013 Belstat implemented an electronic data collection system for all statistical domains. All enterprises covered by business statistics have the possibility to fill in the questionnaires (forms) in an electronic way and transmit data electronically to the regional statistical offices. Approximately 90 percent of the enterprises transmit statistical data by internet.
109. To reduce the reporting burden on respondents, Belstat and other producers of official statistics annually optimise statistical questionnaires (forms) by coordinating and agreeing on their content, so as to avoid duplication and redundancy. Belstat is planning to implement statistical data collection in an online regime as of 2016, if feasible.

## **2.4. Relevance**

110. User needs are identified within the framework of the Statistical Work Programme. The draft programme is reviewed by the Interagency Council on State Statistics.
111. Belstat periodically conducts user satisfaction surveys. Belstat assesses user confidence in and satisfaction with official statistics each quarter via the official website (using an

electronic questionnaire for users). According to the results of the survey during the first quarter of 2015, the main users of the data are businesses (38.7 %) and students (22.1 %). The main areas of interest to users are finance (28.9 % of users), prices (21.6 %), statistics on small and medium enterprises (19.1 %), industry (15.2 %), and retail and wholesale trade (25.4 %). 27.4 % of the users use statistical information 1-2 times per month, and 5.9 % of the users use statistical data every day. Most users (73.5 %) indicate that their main source for statistical information is the Belstat website. User satisfaction currently stands at 67.2 %, with a confidence index of 68.3%.

## 2.5. Accuracy and reliability

112. Compliance with the approved methodology for calculating the total volume of industrial production and the industrial production indices ensures consistency across annual, quarterly and monthly industry statistics using the correction coefficients obtained through annual industry statistics surveys.
113. The coefficient of variation (CV) is not computed for any of the monthly, quarterly or annual data.

## 2.6. Timeliness and punctuality

114. Belstat has a calendar of publications available on the official website.
115. Belstat respects deadlines and publishes BS according to the following calendar.

Monthly, quarterly and annual results	Key dates in the national production process				
	Date of start of data collection	Date of end of data collection	Date of end of quality check and weighting for statistics published in press release	Date of national publication of press release	Date of national dissemination of micro-data and metadata
<b>SBS</b>					
	12 January	12 April	30 May	7 June	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
<b>STS</b>					
Employment (monthly and quarterly data)	12 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	18 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	23 <sup>rd</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	24 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Industry (monthly and quarterly/ annual data)	1 <sup>st</sup> day of each month 11 February	4 <sup>th</sup> day of each month/ 17 March	11 <sup>th</sup> day of each month/ 20 June	16 <sup>th</sup> day of each month/ 20 June	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Construction	4 <sup>th</sup> day of each month, quarter / 27 February (annual)	10 <sup>th</sup> day of each month, quarter / 20 March (annual)	16 <sup>th</sup> day of each month, quarter / 27 May (annual)	19 <sup>th</sup> day of each month, quarter / 25 May (annual)	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.



Monthly, quarterly and annual results	Key dates in the national production process				
	Date of start of data collection	Date of end of data collection	Date of end of quality check and weighting for statistics published in press release	Date of national publication of press release	Date of national dissemination of micro-data and metadata
Retail trade	3 <sup>rd</sup> day of each month	11 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	13 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	18 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Wholesale trade	5 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	11 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	13 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	18 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Business to population services	28 <sup>th</sup> day after the reference quarter	11 <sup>th</sup> day of the second month after the reference quarter	13 <sup>th</sup> day of the second month after the reference quarter	24 <sup>th</sup> day of the second month after the reference quarter	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Transport	1 <sup>st</sup> day of each month	6 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	16 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	17 <sup>th</sup> day of each month	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.
Communication	14 <sup>th</sup> day after the reporting quarter	24 <sup>th</sup> day after the reporting quarter	40 <sup>th</sup> day after the reporting quarter	49 <sup>th</sup> day after the reporting quarter	Micro-data are not disseminated. Metadata are available on Belstat's website.

## 2.7. Coherence and comparability

116. The definition of statistical unit only partially complies with international standards because the statistical unit "enterprise" is equal to the legal entity. For medium and large enterprises, data are compiled at the asset holder level.

117. Annual BS are partially compliant with EU standards. Differences refer mainly to the coverage of indicators.

118. For SBS and STS indicators, aggregated data is consistent at the territorial level (regional and national).

## 2.8. Accessibility and clarity

119. Annual results are disseminated through the publications *Small and Medium-Sized Business in the Republic of Belarus*, *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Belarus*, *Regions of the Republic of Belarus*, available in PDF. Data are also available on Belstat's website.

120. Results of the SBS and STS are available in PDF. Data are also available on Belstat's website.

### 3 International organisations and activities related to BS

121. Belstat cooperates with international organisations mainly by taking part in seminars related to the topics of business statistics.
122. In 2013, UNIDO organised a high-level inception seminar within the framework of the regional project '*Improvement of industrial statistics and development of indicators of industrial performance for policy-relevant analysis in CIS countries*'. The seminar addressed the key methodological issues of industrial statistics in CIS countries and initiated discussions to align industrial statistics with international standards.
123. The Adapted Global Assessment (AGA) of the national system of official statistics of the Republic of Belarus was undertaken within the framework of the Eurostat-funded project '*Global assessments of statistical systems of candidate and potential candidate countries as well as ENP countries*'. The conclusions stem from assessment missions that took place between 22 and 27 October 2012 and between 20 and 22 March 2013. The Adapted Global Assessment (AGA) of the National Statistical System (NSS) of the Republic of Belarus evaluated how well Belarusian statistics conform to EU standards. The evaluation used the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP) and the Eurostat Statistical Requirements Compendium. The aim of this AGA was to improve the NSS and align NSS practices with EU and international recommendations, standards and best practices.
124. From 5 to 6 May 2015, the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus hosted the first meeting of the Statistics Panel. The meeting was organised within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The topic of the meeting was business statistics. Representatives from the European Commission (Eurostat) and the national statistical offices of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and Ukraine took part in the meeting. The sessions focused on the EU standards that regulate the collection, compilation and dissemination of BS in areas such as Statistical Business Register, Business Demography, Structural Business Statistics and Short-Term Statistics. Representatives also discussed related methodological issues. The aim of the meeting was to support the alignment of national BS methodologies in the Eastern Partnership countries with EU standards. Eurostat organised the event with financial support from the European Commission. The Statistics Panel was established in November 2014 under Platform 2 '*Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies*' of the Eastern Partnership. The Statistics Panel helps with economic integration and compliance with EU sector policies by supporting the alignment of governance and statistical methodology with EU standards. This process enables efficient knowledge sharing and encourages best practices in statistics production and use.
125. Since 2012, Belstat staff participated in several events concerning business statistics: UNECE Workshop on seasonal adjustment, Workshop on production indices, Workshop on statistical survey of small business, Meetings of the Wiesbaden Group on business registers, United Nations workshop on International Statistical Classifications, Training course on business Research Methodology and Data Analysis, Meeting of the Group of Experts on business registers and Session on Business registers for developing and transition economies, High-level inception seminar of CIS countries on the implementation of regional project on industrial statistics (UNIDO), Training course on advanced methods for sample surveys, Training course on the use of administrative registers in the production of statistics, Training course on structural business statistics. Such kind of training activities are found very useful by Belstat staff in order to achieve strategic goals.

## 4 Further developments

126. Belstat is advised to continue its efforts to comply with the requirements of the STS and SBS regulations.
127. It is recommended that Belstat implements further improvements so that the statistical unit used in BS is coherent with international standards.
128. In SBS, data processing of the administrative data should be improved. Belstat should prioritise the analysis of additional data sources to increase the number of variables compiled.
129. It is recommended that the SBS and STS questionnaires (forms) are redesigned to reduce the burden on respondents.

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

130. The main recommendations of the sectoral review on business statistics are as follows. Belstat is encouraged to:

- Implement international standards regarding the definition and use of statistical units (instead of using legal units as observation unit, the "enterprise" should be used) to increase comparability of its business data with data from other countries.
- Ensure that dissemination of data is consistent with international standards (data should be disseminated by enterprise, local unit, kind of activity unit - depending on the domain of statistics) to align its dissemination practice with international standards.
- Disseminate publications with a clear definition of the statistical unit used and a statement about what the statistical unit data refer to so that the coverage of the published statistics is better understood.
- Promote activities to raise statistical literacy and awareness to ensure that users and in particular the public administration and decision makers use official statistics for evidence-based policy making.
- Improve and enhance the use of administrative data to reduce response burden and to improve data quality through imputation and data cross-checking.
- Improve the quality of the statistical business register to improve the overall quality and comparability of data on businesses/enterprises.
- Ensure the comparability of business statistics across different domains and types of statistical surveys ensuring that the statistical unit is treated in a similar way in STS and SBS. This will assure the coherence and quality of statistical data.
- Formalise statistical processes by using standards and models to describe statistical processes coherently. Information about statistical outputs will increase the understanding and thus, the use of the data.
- Design and publish a revision policy in line with international recommendations to inform users about the reasons and schedules of revisions. This will help to increase statistical literacy and the use of the available data.
- Design and publish a dissemination policy so that users are informed about the schedules of data publications (calendar for the whole year by indicators, not only for 3 months), content and standards.

- Produce business statistics indicators according to international standards and recommendations to increase international comparability (periodicity, definition of indicators, statistical units).
- Ensure comparable treatment of the reporting and observation of statistical units for STS and annual data to increase the consistency of data.
- Review the training programme to focus more on quality issues. Training should be tailored to the needs of all staff working in business statistics.
- Extend data collection coverage for all market services and non-market services to improve the coverage of business statistics and hence, national accounts. This will increase international comparability.
- Start calculating the coefficients of variation for infra-annual and annual data to inform users about quality aspects of the published data.
- Start preparing monthly and quarterly adjusted STS time series for seasonal and working days to increase the comparability of the data and their coverage of the reality.

## 6 References

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3. Quality policy of Belstat: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/o-belstate/pravovye-osnovy-gosudarstvennoi-statistiki-respubl/>
4. Annual working programme: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/programma-statisticheskikh-rabot/>
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6. User satisfaction survey (questionnaire):  
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7. Description of the business register.