# Communication with businesses and response burden

**Deirdre Giesen & Ger Snijkers**
*EESW 9-11 September 2013*

Statistics
Netherlands

# Outline

- Overview "communication findings" BLUE-ETS
- Recommendations for NSI communication with businesses
- Directions for further research

# **Acknowledgements**

**BLUE-ETS deliverables 2.1 2.3 3.1.3.2 8.1; workshop on communication (Brussels 27-11-21012)** [www.blue-ets.eu](www.blue-ets.eu)

Ger Snijkers & Jacqui Jones (2013) Business Survey Communication
Chapter 9 in "Designing and Conduction Business Surveys"

# BLUE-ETS research on burden and motivation

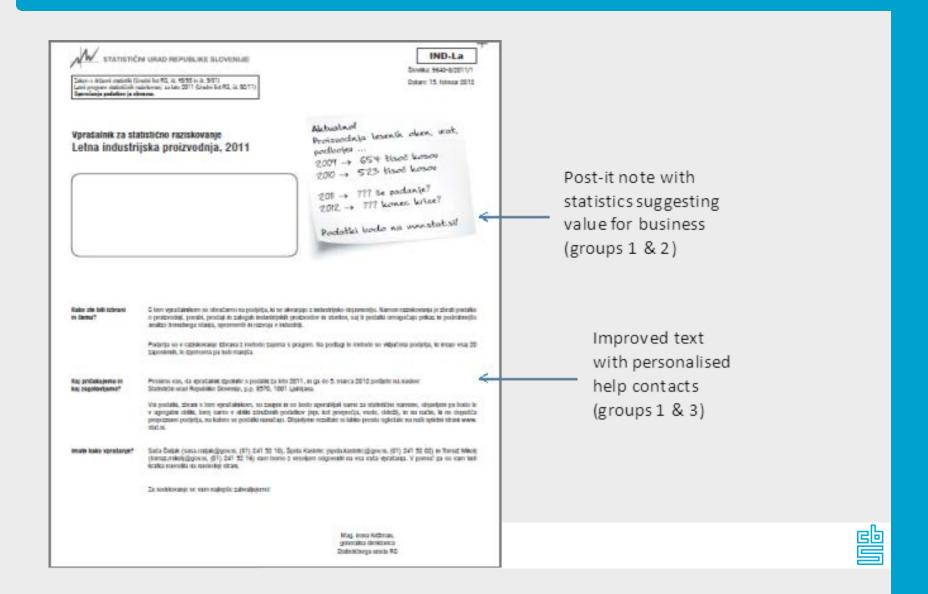| | |
|---|---|
| Measurement and reduction of response burden in official business surveys NSIs practice | Businesses' perspectives on official statistics e.g. |

Case studies

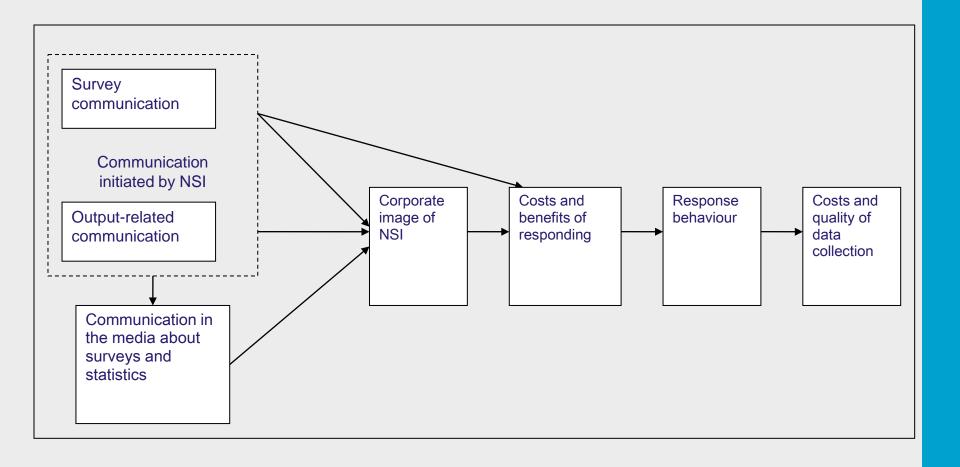| | |
|---|---|
| Analyses of data on burden and response behaviour in Sweden, Norway and Netherlands | Studies on effects of actions to reduce burden and/or increase motivation: Experiments on improving motivation in Sweden and Slovenia, studies on effects of questionnaire design in Norway and The Netherlands |

# Slovenian experiment (Bavdaž & Bolko 2013)



Post-it note with statistics suggesting value for business (groups 1 & 2)

Improved text with personalised help contacts (groups 1 & 3)

# Framework for NSI communication and response behaviour

# Results case studies 1

- Response burden related to response behaviour, eg. more burden: lower and later response, more edits needed
- Perceived burden related to actual burden but also by perception of NSI and usefulness statistics

# Results case studies 2

- Experiments aiming at increasing motivation by better communication did not show many of the expected effects.
- The two questionnaire studies showed that questionnaire redesign can reduce actual and perceived burden

# Recommendations

# Promote consistent and positive image

Show *in all types of communication* that NSI is
- thrustworthy
- friendly
- professional
- produces valuable output
- and cares about both response burden and quality.

# Build relationships

- Build and manage relationships with key stake holders in business world (e.g. advisory councils with representatives of business as users and providers of data; contacts with business organisations; outreach activities).
- Develop and promote dedicated output relevant to target groups in business world (e.g. statistical packages for starting your business, statistical package for market research, quick scan for benchmarking).
- Communicate about these things
- ....

# pre-field survey communication

- Know respondents (e.g. record keeping studies, profiling of large businesses)
- Keep registers and contact information up to date
- Use survey calendars to help business plan their resources
- …

# field survey communication

- Provide clear address information on envelope
- Indicate Unit / Reporting period / Deadline on letter ánd questionnaire
- Be clear about mandatory status, but do not stress immediately
- Provide appealing reasons for need of the survey request
- Use incentives (?)
- Provide efficient assistance for questions and complaints (e.g. website, helpdesk, complaint procedures)
- Provide single point of contact for large enterprises
- Document special arrangements for respondents
- Indicate changes in questionnaire
- User-friendly questionnaires
- ...

# Post-field survey communication

- Provide feed-back about status of submitted questionnaire
- Plan follow-up calls as quickly as possible after submission of questionnaire
- Use information of past response behaviour for design of follow-up strategies / sanctions
- …

# Directions future research

- Focus on communication for SMEs

- What are effective strategies to affect response behaviour?
- What motivates respondents besides surveys being mandatory?
- How to explain the relevance of a survey to a business?
- If and how to work with incentives
- Should we include information in letters about how long it takes to complete?

# How to make progress

- Involve businesses organisations and businesses in design of surveys and other communications aimed at businesses
- Bring in theories form various disciplines
- Study actual behaviour of business respondents
- Collect management info to monitor data collection process
- Evaluate results of actions
- Try to do experiments or pilot studies
- Document and share work done