

Regional labour market statistics at a European level – small number of survey respondents

Michal Mladý, Eurostat

The regional labour market statistics which Eurostat provides for EU-25, EFTA (Norway, Island) and candidate countries (Bulgaria and Romania) could be a very rewarding field for applying small area estimation techniques. The speaker will give an overview of the available data set at Eurostat. He will briefly explain the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS), then talk about the various regional levels of the labour market data and, finally, clarify the LFS publishing limits and their harmonisation.

1. EU Labour Force Survey (LFS)

LFS represents the main source of regional labour market data provided by Eurostat. The LFS is a quarterly household sample survey and its target population is made up of all persons in private households aged 15 and over.

All regional labour market data provided by Eurostat can be found on the Eurostat web-site <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/> according to the following categories: Regional economically active population, employment, unemployment, socio-demographic labour force statistics and labour market data based on pre-2003 methodology (data up to 2001).

2. Regional levels of the labour market data

Down to NUTS level 2, LFS represents the only source of the regional labour market data. For NUTS level 3, LFS NUTS level 2 data are apportioned to level 3 according to the distribution of either LFS NUTS-3 data or NUTS-3 register data (if the LFS results at NUTS level 3 are considered unreliable). At NUTS level 3, Eurostat publishes the following statistics: economically active population, unemployed persons and unemployment rates by sex and age (15-24, 25 and over). Unemployment figures in many NUTS level 3 regions often represent only a small number of survey respondents – especially in the age group 15-24. These figures are considered to be unreliable and are not published. Regional unemployment statistics is thus an area in which the application of SAE methods could be studied.

3. LFS publishing limits (thresholds)

In order to avoid the publication of figures which are statistically unreliable, Eurostat implemented LFS publishing guidelines introducing two limits (thresholds) based on the sample size and sample design in the various Member States:

A limit – figures below this limit are considered to be unreliable, are not published and are replaced by a colon (:).

B limit – figures between A and B limit are published with a warning concerning their reliability.

As relative standard errors of the limits set by National Statistical Institutes vary significantly, countries were asked to provide Eurostat with harmonised limits corresponding to different level of relative standard errors (10 %, 15 %, 20 %, 25 % and 30 %).