

CEPR Microdata Workshop Paris, June 15-16, 2023

Background

Microdata are increasingly important for economic policy and research work. However, access to such data remains difficult.

In this workshop, data users and providers will exchange information on three specific topics:

1. What data are available and what are the best practices in micro-data sharing;
2. What other data needs to be gathered for compelling economic needs;
3. What concrete initiative can be taken to secure wider and effective data access.

The results of the workshop will be collected in a white paper which can then be used to design and implement a plan of action for promoting better access to microdata in Europe and beyond.

The status quo

Availability of reliable micro data—particularly data matched across different sources—is an essential tool for research and policy work. National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) have made great progress in collecting high quality micro datasets from surveys and administrative sources. Nevertheless, owing to confidentiality rules, these data are generally not publicly available, although some NSIs are now allowing selected access to certified national research communities under strict legal conditions.

Efforts to create standardized datasets that can be easily accessible by the research community and compared across countries, include [CompNet](#) and [LIS](#). Institutions like the World Bank also publish microdata that are comparable across countries and there have been efforts by Eurostat, OECD, and the ECB to promote access to microdata for scientific and statistical purposes. But there is much potential for improvement.

In the current environment researchers face 3 main challenges:

1. Access to microdata collected by national statistical offices is still mostly based on who you are and who you know. Most countries and statistical offices do not have clear and transparent rules for data access. This situation penalizes researchers who do not belong to well-established networks.
2. There are issues related to cross-country comparability.
3. Microdata available from commercial providers tend to be extremely expensive. They thus exclude researchers who do not belong to rich institutions or have large research budgets. There are also issues with the quality of data provided by these commercial outfits.

Organization of the workshop

The closed-door discussion will focus on the three broad items highlighted above:

1. What is available
2. What we want
3. How we can get it

The discussion will be led by three main groups of participants: (1) International data managers: representatives of institutions and initiatives seeking broader cross-country access; (2) national data providers: particularly the ones operating efficient access platforms at the national level; and 3) Data users: Academics who are familiar with micro data and their problematics.

The outcome of the meeting will be a white paper which will be both a call of action for improving access to microdata in Europe but also a catalogue of what is already available. The idea is to centralize information which, so far, is dispersed across fields and researchers. The idea is to use the CEPR network to build a consensus on how to build resources to support microdata provision in Europe.

Tentative programme

Thursday, June 15	
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-13:45	Welcome and Workshop's Objectives Tessa Ogden (CEPR), Filippo di Mauro (CompNet and CEPR), Ugo Panizza (The Graduate Institute, Geneva and CEPR)
13:45-14:20	What We Have I: LIS and CompNet Chair: tbc Panellists Filippo di Mauro (CompNet and CEPR) Teresa Munzi (LIS) 10 minutes per presenter 15 mins discussion
14:20-15:50	What We Have II: International Organizations Chair: tbc Panellists Johannes Breckenfelder (ECB) (Online) Ralph de Haas (EBRD) Pat McGuire (BIS) Norman Loayza (World Bank) (TBC) Douglas Sutherland (OECD) Filiz Unsal (OECD) 10 minutes per presenter 40 mins discussion
15:50-16:10	Coffee/Tea Break
16:10-16:40	What We Have III: Microdata in France Chair: tbc Panellists

	<p>Michel Julliard (Banque de France and CASD) Rémy Marquier (CASD) Jean-Pierre Villetelle (Banque de France and CASD)</p> <p>15 minutes presentation 15 mins discussion</p>
16:40-18:30	<p>What we want II: Development, Industrial Organization, Organizational Economics, Public Economics, Political Economics, labour</p> <p>Chair: tbc</p> <p>Panellists Marco Manacorda (Queen Mary University, London and CEPR) (Online) Javier Miranda (IWH) David Seim (Stockholm University and CEPR) Gabriel Ulyssea (UCL and CEPR) (TBC) Jo van Biesebroeck (KU Leuven and CEPR) (Online)</p> <p>10 minutes per panelist (what is available and what is not but could be) 50 mins discussion</p>
Friday, June 16	
8:30-8:40	Coffee
8:40-10:30	<p>What we want I: Finance, International Macro, Macroeconomics and growth, Monetary Economics, Economic history, Trade</p> <p>Chair: tbc</p> <p>Panellists Giuseppe Berlingieri (ESSEC and CEPR) Giancarlo Corsetti (EUI and CEPR) (online) Thiemo Fetzer (Warwick University and CEPR) Miklos Koren (Central European University and CEPR)</p> <p>10 minutes per panelist (what is available and what is not but could be) 50 mins discussion</p>
10:30-10:50	Coffee/Tea Break
10:50-12:30	<p>How do we get there? Open Discussion</p>
12:30-13:00	Next steps

1) What we have

We will start documenting what is already available and discuss what we can learn from success stories like CompNet and LIS. International organisations will add their experience:

- The World Bank will be possibly attending illustrating cross country initiative such as the legacy survey for the 'Doing business report'
- OECD on their MULTIPROD
- BIS on their datasets on financial transactions

2) What else we need

Most of the research groups of the CEPR network, comprising some 2000 members academics across the world, will be represented in the meeting and will be able to share selectively their experience and most notably the additional kind of information that they would like to see being made available.

3) How do we design a credible plan of action

The most critical source of weakness in the micro-data handling system is the huge gap it exists between researchers needs and capacity of data providers to effectively deliver. NSI are structurally understaffed and lack completely the incentives and the capacity for seriously undertaking cross country coordination projects. The realistic way out is to fully take this into consideration and orchestrate forms in which additional NSI staff can be financed for such purposes. Few NSI have already and successfully implemented forms of financing per data use. Such is the case for instance for the Netherlands and Finland NSIs, as well as the French CASD. Recognized data users pay fees for data services, but for amounts which are a small fraction than for commercially available data and for incredibly better quality. Participants and their institutions will need to reflect on ways to implement concretely such plans.

