3: Technical impact of the crises on the sampling and response rates

Over approximately 20 years, Slovakia has undergone many political and economic changes.

The economy has experienced a transformation and undergone a number of reforms accompanied by a decrease and a subsequent increase of confidence. The cycles varied both in length and level. During these cycles, enterprises terminating their activity, were excluded.

The year 2004 was an important milestone for the economy when Slovakia joined the EU and has become even more attractive also abroad.
During this period-until 2007, the consumer confidence indicators and indicators in almost all sectors were optimistic.

The turning point occurred at the end of 2008 and the long-term trends failed.

Economic sentiment indicator (ESI) continuously decreased and in May it reached the lowest level since the beginning of the ESI calculation´s realization (January 1997).

Confidence indicator in services was up to 54 percentage points below the level of the long-term average, in trade by -33, in industry by -29 and in construction by -26 points.

Thus, crisis was reflected at the end of 2008 and at the beginning of 2009 obviously also in the return of business consumer templates. There was a lot of pessimism and concerns over future development in the business sector. The economic situation of respondents followed the overall situation on the financial markets in Slovakia and all over the world. The market collapse adversely affected the whole financial sector which resulted in decreased interest of investors for investing.

The concomitant circumstances such as the decreased demand and the subsequent price decrease of products and services affected a lot of enterprises comprising a group of respondents of the business consumer surveys. It was reflected not only in the increased negative response rate on individual questions but also in the number of respondents who stopped communicating with us.

This mainly involved more influential enterprises.

The SOSR staff dealing with the collection and processing of the business consumer survey results had to make substantial efforts to communicate with the respondents and motivate them to higher response rates.

Based on long-term experiences, it is confirmed that the occasional phone contact with respondents, to explain the importance of any response (also with negative evaluation) is very important for the correct evaluation of the development.

Since June 2009, ESI increased gradually, though since 2011 it is constantly below the level of the long-term average. This means that the respondents express themselves with more restraint (more cautiously). The development is still affected by the crisis.

Within the surveys conducted in Slovakia, those sectors where the drop-out of enterprises from the sample was more significant than in any other sector, have not been observed.

There is no evidence in our country that the “upward bias” was caused by the crisis.

Indicators reflect volatility and in each quarter the development of the ESI was influenced by other sector.

Consumer survey: Losing contacts does not really matter to customers as the surveys are conducted face-to-face. Even if someone is affected by the crisis, e.g. loses his/her job, receives social security benefits, they can freely decide whether or not they will be engaged in a survey, or respond or not to respond to the questions.