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Paper to Plenary Session 5: Reconciliation of Micro and Macro Aspects of the Household Sector in the National Accounts Framework

The Relevance of the German Household Budget Survey for National Accounts

The sample survey of income and expenditure (household budget survey) provides statistical information on household income, property and debt as well as on final consumption of private households in Germany. Every five years, approximately 0.2% of all households in Germany are covered by the survey. In total about 75 000 households participate in the survey. It has been conducted in the former territory of the Federal Republic since 1962 and in the new Länder since 1993.

In German national accounts, the household budget survey is used in two areas: Firstly for calculating household final consumption and secondly for the enlargement of the income account. German national accounts have a long tradition in calculating disposable income of socio-demographic household groups in accordance with national accounts and the System of National Accounts (SNA 93) respectively. In this context the household budget survey is the main basis for the breakdown of the macroeconomic income data. Nevertheless this survey data can not be applied directly in national accounts because of conceptual and empirical differences.

The paper is dealing with these differences between micro data derived from the household budget survey and the requirements of national accounts. Conceptual differences include constraints of household surveys like underestimating of certain consumer goods or types of income e.g. property income. Methodical aspects of the survey have to be considered too. One important question is the representative coverage of all population groups. Furthermore some empirical comparisons will show the relevance of such differences for Germany. Mainly, the paper illustrates some typical conceptual and empirical differences between micro and macro approaches.

Concluding remarks point out the role of household budget surveys for national accounts. Some potentials and limits of using survey based micro data for calculating macro aggregates and disaggregating given macro data are discussed.