

COSTS OF LIVING DATA COLLECTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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CONTEXT

- Six countries covered.
- The presentation lists the issues/dilemmas we faced during data collection. Many of them resolved in the meantime.
- Initially, there was a one country team (Bosnia-Herzegovina). This raised some of the issues.
- Since recently, a solution applied was to establish a regional team with one representative from each country
 - Experts with extensive research experience on labour market issues
 - Improved understanding of a country level context, including language, cultural differences, ...
 - A team with a common research agenda in development

ISSUE WITH THE USE OF THE APP (I)

- Specific web shops for different regions in the country – There are no so many web-shops that are delivering products in specific regions within the country (mostly related to food items), most of them are located in the capital, or deliver products in different regions but charge extra costs for delivering products outside the region. These costs are calculated for the entire purchase and thus can not be added to the single product.
- Some web-shops are available only as a mobile app, we use this as web-shops, but not sure is it considered as a web-shop, since you can not see prices on-line, but only by using the app?
- Do we need to enter one survey per one data source (shop) for one item group (for example for food) and then the second one for another item group (for example occupation-related items)? What if there are food and occupational-related items available in the same shop, do we need to enter them separately or we can do this within one survey?
- To include instruction to hit the button “Send to database”, since we have several times issues with this step
- To include instruction to choose the option "Did you collect the prices from an online shop?"

ISSUE WITH THE USE OF THE APP (2)

- Is there any way to enter data sources together with data in the same survey app, so we don't need an additional excel sheet? It will be easier to enter data and sources in this way, and also for quality control if someone forgets to hit the button Send to the database then we know which one is missing and can enter them again.
- To include instruction that there are additional questions for housing items that we need to check when collecting data, i.e. when we enter a price for an apartment, we need to choose housing costs that are included in the rent. What if there is no information included in the description of the apartment?
- There are differences between the English version of the survey items and the ones available in the Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian languages which may affect the data collected.
- Is there an option to hide tabs that we don't need to collect in the particular region in one data collection round – we had examples where persons collected data for all tabs, but we need only food? Data collectors get confused with these tabs.

ISSUES WITH SPECIFIC ITEMS – FOOD (I)

- For food items, what if we find items that are a little below or above the suggested quantity. For example, if there is only packaging that is 950 g, and you have listed only 250 g, 500 g and 1 kg. Are we allowed to calculate the price for 1 kg and enter it, although no such item can be purchased?
- If we follow the general instruction to choose the cheapest price, what if there is only one item available in the observed web-shop and we know that this product is not the cheapest one when compared with other shops, but is the only one available?
- The description of the item lists in the food section – for example for milk, semi-skimmed milk, the percentage of fat and similar questions (for yoghurt is the same)?
- Available quantities for tea, there are no packages of 100 bags or 1 kg in our shops?

ISSUES WITH SPECIFIC ITEMS – FOOD (2)

- Items that are not usual for our culture, as bulgur and if found in shops, the price is higher than for usual items used for cooking.
- Sunflower oil and cooking oil – in our culture it is the same, we use sunflower oil regularly for cooking.
- Loaf of Fresh White Bread – with or without plastic packaging?
- Local cheese – which one?
- Seasonal food items, which are available during the year, but more expensive out of season (for example Spinach) – do we enter them?

ISSUES WITH SPECIFIC ITEMS - HOUSING

- There is a difference between the size of the apartment and the number of rooms? What is meant by a standard 2-bedroom apartment?
- How to choose the location for the apartment, since there are differences in prices between the rural and urban parts of the city?

ISSUES WITH SPECIFIC ITEMS - OCCUPATIONAL

- Car insurance - all risks covered or basic – for which car type? Data in our region cannot be accessed online because we need further information about car (registration)
- Motorbike/scooter insurance - all risks covered or basic – for which type?
- Monthly mobile data plan – as part of the service covered with the monthly phone bill, prepaid, post-paid service?
- Smartphone-which type, manufacturer?
- Laptop-which type, manufacturer, processor, storage space?

SOLUTIONS FOR SOME OF THE QUESTIONS

Technical guidelines on how to use the survey app :

https://docs.google.com/document/d/lyxht9sLdhEL_OxtVBAAIMNLXf7MM5FtOINXxjJ-otvQ/edit)

Item lists (food):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13DrDrQQQxpTvZVGA7mmIwofKkCpzAKBuHqdd3TtwlSk/edit#gid=717751054>

Item lists (housing items):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13DrDrQQQxpTvZVGA7mmIwofKkCpzAKBuHqdd3TtwlSk/edit#gid=717751054>

Item lists (occupational-related items):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13DrDrQQQxpTvZVGA7mmIwofKkCpzAKBuHqdd3TtwlSk/edit#gid=717751054>