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## ***INTRODUCTION***



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France's Business Survey on the Situation and Outlook in the Building Crafts Sector (Enquête de Conjoncture sur la Situation et les Perspectives dans l'Artisanat du Bâtiment; hereafter "Building Crafts Survey" or simply "Survey") tracks recent activity and short-term expectations of business owners by recording their qualitative opinion on these issues on a quarterly basis. The Survey covers small businesses in the building industry with fewer than eleven employees.

Sub-annual business and consumer surveys such as the Building Crafts Survey provide invaluable information for short-term analysis and forecasting. As a rule, the data supplied by these surveys on the recent past are of very high quality. But the crucial advantage of this information source is that the data are gathered far more rapidly than the quantitative statistics. Moreover, the data undergo minimal revision. Their main users are economists, forecasters, decision-makers, and journalists<sup>1</sup>.

The Building Crafts Survey meets demand from official organisations. Unlike most INSEE business surveys, however, it does not form part of the Joint Harmonised European Union (EU) Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys<sup>2</sup>.

Like all INSEE business and consumer surveys, the Building Crafts Survey was redesigned in the second half of the 1990s<sup>3</sup>.

Survey results are disseminated nationally via the INSEE Macroeconomic Database (Banque de données macroéconomiques: BDM), the *Informations Rapides* bulletin, and the online publication of the latter on the INSEE website (<http://www.insee.fr>).

The present volume of *Insee Méthodes* describes the main characteristics of the redesigned Building Crafts Survey and provides a framework for interpreting its results.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see the summary technical description of the Building Crafts Survey in Appendix 1 (item 9).

<sup>2</sup> The Joint Harmonised European Union (EU) Programme comprises the following business and consumer surveys conducted by INSEE: industry (current situation and outlook), industrial investment, services (current situation and outlook), retail trade (current situation and outlook), construction (building industry [enterprises with more than 10 employees], public works), and households. For more details on the harmonised system, see, for example: *The French business survey on the situation and outlook in industry: methodology*, *Insee Méthodes* no. 117, April 2007, §4.

<sup>3</sup> The new version was launched in July 1999. A long-term backcasting was performed on the Survey series.

