

Introduction

This book has the same basic objective as its predecessor, *Handbuch der Ifo-Umfragen*, published in 1989. It aims to provide an overview of the regular survey activities of the Ifo Institute as well as to show how the survey results can be used scientifically in the context of business cycle analysis and forecasting.

Examples of the various business surveys of the Institute are described in detail, starting with their objectives, the questions they ask, how they are weighted and extrapolated and the representativeness of their results. A detailed scientific examination of the explanatory value of the data is also made in order to demonstrate their potential usefulness. The analyses are presented separately from the technical descriptions of the surveys themselves.

The book has three parts. In the first part the importance of business surveys for empirical economic research is presented. The second part introduces selected surveys in detail. These include the well-known survey instruments of the Ifo Institute such as the Ifo Business Survey and the Ifo Investment Survey but also the new survey in the services sector. A comparison with the manual of 1989 shows that the traditional business surveys have undergone clear revisions. This is the result of both the harmonisation efforts of the EU Commission as well as the continuous adaptation of the survey instruments to the changing information needs of business cycle research.

In the third part, on the significance of survey results, a broad spectrum of studies is presented. This applies to both the examined survey results as well as to the study objectives. The significance of the surveys applies equally to business cycle analysis and to forecasting. A broad spectrum of modern methods of time series analysis and econometric model construction is used in these investigations.

The chapters contained in this book were written by researchers at the Ifo Institute and by external economists closely connected with the Institute. I extend my gratitude to them all.

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