LFS Workshop Gdansk, 23-24 May 2013
Abstract Austria, Melitta Fasching

Theme E, Subject Dissemination and publication issues
Title: Publication of small figures

When publishing times series based on the Austrian LFS we very often face the problem of small values which are even more difficult to present than data based on one period only.

Reliability restrictions within a single period
If LFS results concern one single year or one single quarter it is clear to use the limits for publication for AT as e.g. published in „EU LFS – data and publication".
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_%E2%80%93_data_and_publication
Depending on the sample size and the design in the AT LFS the reliability limits are a weighted number of 3000 for figures to be suppressed (x) in tables and weighted 6000 for publishing in brackets (annual average of the quarterly data; 4000/8000 for quarterly data). The sample error of the weighted number of persons is +/-50% upwards for suppression and +/-33,3% to +/-50% for brackets.


Reliability restrictions in comparisons over time
But how to deal with comparisons over time? The AT publications also present a comparison year to year and year to 5 years ago in our annual publication (resp. comparison quarter to quarter, quarter to quarter one year before and quarter to quarter two years before in our quarterly publication) in the result tables. For these comparisons the standard deviation is even higher. And here AT uses the same thresholds as mentioned above for suppressing figures and setting brackets. This is not really correct since they do not reflect the same sample error. Therefore an annex with tables is added in the quarterly publication which show the confidence interval (95%) for main figures (employed, parttime employed, unemployed, persons out of labour force – for both sex) and main indicators (employment-rate, unemployment-rate, part-time-rate - for both sex) for changes quarter to quarter or quarter to quarter one year before.

Description of small figures and the confidence interval in text and diagram

When presenting data in our standard reports we avoid to report changes when the underlying figures are too small to support any interpretation. In the result tables we explain the suppressions and brackets in the footnote.

Generally a possibility to inform about the confidence interval is to insert it in a diagram e. g. done in the diagram about unemployment rates for the AT NUTS2 countries.
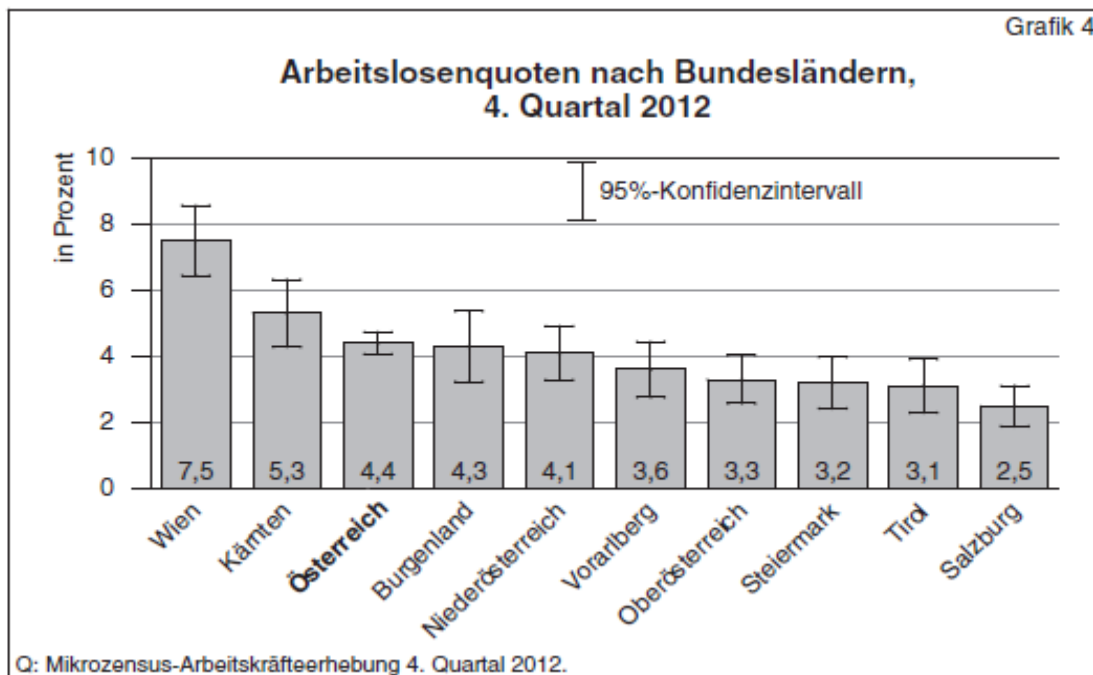
Annexed you can find tables with small figures and annex tables from our publication in AT.

Our solution is somehow unsatisfactory since users still tend to interpret changes over time as „real changes". We would like to know how other countries deal with that problem.

Melitta Fasching
Statistics Austria
Email: melitta.fasching@statistik.gv.at