

Directorate General Economics, Statistics and Research

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Guidelines on the workings of the Banco de España Laboratory Data (BELab)

General rules

Statistics/Central Balance Sheet Data Office

ÍNDICE

- 1 Introduction **1**
- 2 Available data **1**
- 3 How to gain access to the data **1**
- 4 Data confidentiality and conditions of use **2**
- 5 Data room location **3**
- 6 Conditions of access to the Banco de España building **3**
- 7 Software available in BELab workstations **3**
- 8 Protocol for output extraction **4**
- 9 Policy for the storage of data used in the project **4**
- 10 Publication of documents and citing of sources **5**
- 11 Contact details **5**

1 Introduction

Microdata bases are a valuable source of information about the behaviour of economic agents. Their use may provide for a better and deeper understanding of reality. So that the research community may have greater access to high-quality microdata, the Banco de España data Laboratory (BELab) has been set up to pave the way for non-commercial research projects.

In this pilot phase, BELab allows physical access to the CBSO's microdata in a secure environment.

2 Available data

Updated information on the sets of microdata available at the Banco de España laboratory, together with user guides and [interactive information](#) for exploring the laboratory's databases in detail, can be found on the [BELab website](#).

Further, to facilitate the design of the code and reduce the time spent at BELab, researchers may make use of a sample file with fictitious data of all the variables for each of the sets of microdata available.

3 How to gain access to the data

Researchers interested in gaining access to BELab should send a curriculum vitae listing their research activities and the [application form](#), where the aim of the research will be explained. Both documents should be sent through the contact form that can be found on the Banco de España website. The application form also contains information on the co-authors who do not have access to the BELab data and the institutions to which they belong.

A BELab Research Technical Evaluation Committee will assess the application and communicate their decision by email to the sender. Researchers whose research project is approved may have access to the BELab on-site laboratory for a period that will be determined by common accord, with the restrictions (identity card, timetable, etc.) and limitations (access without mobile devices, etc.) that are indicated in the following section of these guidelines.

4 Types of access to data

There are two types of access to data:

- On-site, through a secure room (data room) in the Banco de España building, with isolated computers. Available at the Banco de España's facilities in **Madrid** and **Barcelona**.
- Remote, providing controlled access to the databases without the need to enter a secure room within the Banco de España's premises. This type of access requires researchers to sign additional documentation that will be sent to them once their application is approved.

The possibility of gaining remote access will depend on the sensitivity level of the data. The “Available data” section of the BELab website includes information on the availability of remote access for each database.

5 Data confidentiality and conditions of use

The BELab information is confidential and shall be used exclusively for the purpose declared in the research project approved by the BELab Research Technical Evaluation Committee. Section 4 of the application form specifies the confidentiality commitment that researchers wishing to gain access to the data must sign. Specifically, the requirements that any researcher gaining access to BELab should meet are the following:

- To use the BELab microdata solely and exclusively for the non-commercial study for which they have been requested.
- Not to redistribute data to a third party. In particular, copying and handing over the information made available to a third party, with or without charge, is categorically prohibited.
- Not to perform any action breaching the confidentiality of the data by divulging to third parties unconnected to the study the identity of any firm from the database.
- During the work the researcher undertakes, at all times, to provide those persons designated by the Banco de España with all the information and documentation these persons should request, so that they may be fully aware of the circumstances in which the work is being conducted, of the technologies and tools used, and of any potential problems that may arise.
- The researcher assumes full and exclusive responsibility for the use of the data provided. The intellectual property rights over all the work, IT products and software developments arising from the research correspond solely and exclusively to the researcher. The researcher may reproduce, publish and disseminate them in full or in part. The Banco de España may challenge this if the use of the data released were to be made, in the Bank’s opinion, without meeting the clauses set out here.
- Access to the data shall conclude once the study originating the availability of the data is complete or once the termination date assigned to their use has been reached. However, the present confidentiality obligations governing the BELab microdata shall remain in force indefinitely.
- In the case of on-site access, research shall be conducted in the Banco de España “on-site laboratory” (data room) designated for this purpose. The Bank shall provide both the physical space and work stations with the related standard configuration. In this type of access, the following clauses for the use of the controlled room shall apply:
 - o Researchers shall be responsible for the proper use of the work stations made available to them so that, at all times, such equipment is in perfect working order. They shall further undertake to act in accordance with the IT security rules and procedures in place. The Bank reserves the right to inspect, whenever it deems appropriate, the use of work stations and may require researchers to redress the failings and omissions observed, and to resolve the collaboration when it observes some failing or omission that is not immediately corrected, or to demand it be corrected within a reasonable timeframe in the Bank’s opinion
 - o Researchers may not enter the controlled room with any mobile device. They must leave such devices in the cupboards designated to this end that are located outside the room.

For remote access, there are additional clauses that will be sent to you if you request this modality.

6 Data room locations

- **BELAB**

Alcalá 522, 4th floor
28027 Madrid
Tel.: +34 913 386 918

- **BARCELONA BRANCH OFFICE**

Plaza de Cataluña, 17
08002 Barcelona
Tel.: +34 934 824 700

7 Conditions of access to the Banco de España building

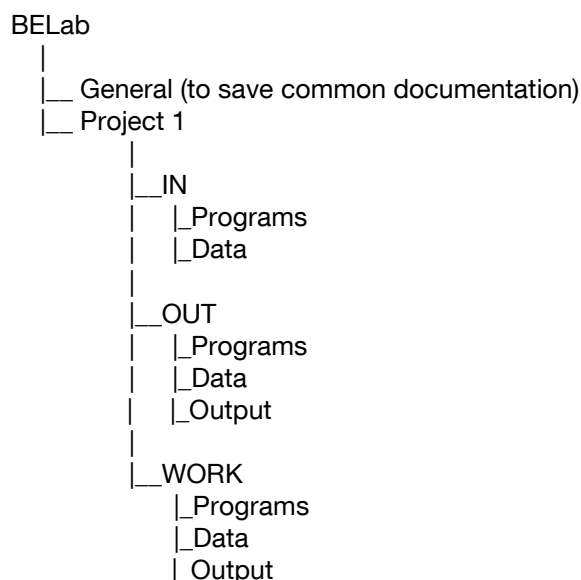
Once researchers have been accepted to undertake a project using BELab data, they must obtain an identification card issued by the Banco de España Security Service. In this connection, researchers are obliged to notify the Banco de España of the data needed so their identity may be registered. Further, the Banco de España security rules in place at each point in time must be met, meaning researchers must wear in a visible place the identification card they are given to this end. This accreditation is personal and non-transferable. Card-holders shall wear it in a visible place no sooner do they enter the building or the premises and for the duration of their stay in the building/premises until they leave. In the event of loss or theft of the card, this should be reported immediately to the Banco de España Security Service, which will provide a duplicate card for the holder. Researchers shall be responsible for returning all cards and accreditations assigned to them.

How this card is obtained will depend on which type of access has been requested. The BELab team will notify researchers of the steps they will need to take in each case.

8 Software available in BELab workstations

The on-site laboratory workstations have statistical software that provides for data treatment, such as Stata, R, Python and Octave. These workstations are isolated and do not allow access to the Internet or to email.

There is a system of directories, predetermined in the top levels that allow researchers to organise the information needed during the development of the project. The structure is as follows:



9 Protocol for output extraction

Once researchers have completed their work and concluded their research in the data room, they shall copy their programs, data and final output into the BeLab/OUT/Programs, BeLab/OUT/Data and BeLab/OUT/Output, respectively, proceeding to delete the rest of the information. This will only occur once researchers confirm that their work has been concluded. The laboratory staff will access these directories to send the resulting files to the email address provided by researchers, following a revision of the output by BELab technical experts to ensure compliance with the confidentiality clauses.

10 Policy for the storage of data used in the project

As regards the storage of data used in the project, a distinction is drawn between three types of information:

1. Original data: the full data matrix with all variables, years and firms available in the MCB application at each point in time shall be kept for five years. Every time there is an update, the new version will be saved with a reference and update date. The MCB application will enable the version it is wished to use as a starting point to be selected. All versions shall be identified in a document with the latest changes they feature.
2. Intermediate data: these data relate to the information stored by researchers in the BELab/ Work directory during the period they have access to the on-site laboratory. Once researchers confirm they have concluded their project and left the laboratory, this information will be deleted. During their stay, researchers will work on the local drive, with the possibility of saving on a network drive what they consider most important for the pursuit of their research. Daily backups will be made only of that information researchers have decided to move to the network drive.
3. Final data: the date, programs and final output of each research project shall be saved in the BeLab/OUT/ directory. This will be stored for a period of five years.

11 Publication of documents and citing of sources

As indicated in the application form, researchers shall be obliged to:

- Mention the source of the data in any publication resulting from this study as indicated in the respective guide for each database.
- Not make any attempt to identify individuals, firms, institutions or any of the entities individually described in the data provided.
- Send a copy of the study undertaken drawing on the data provided, even if this study is not published. Failure to comply with this clause disqualifies researchers from making subsequent requests insofar as the breach referred to is not redressed.

12 Contact details

Banco de España Data Laboratory (BELab)

Tel.: [+34 913 386 918](tel:+34913386918)

[Contact Form](#)