

DATABASES OF CORPORATE DATA IN THE SR

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Databases of corporate data are created with the aim of bringing together information from various sources and enabling the simple searching of data on the basis of various criteria, which as a rule are the line of business, legal form, territory and size. A further reason for the creation of commercial databases results from the need to check on a firm as a business partner, i.e. to obtain its financial data and an evaluation of its financial situation (creditworthiness).

Databases may contain either exhaustive information on firms operating in a specific territory, or may be aimed solely at a certain group, limited, for example, by the size of firm or line of business. They are essentially created in two ways:

- on the basis of data that a firm provides on the basis of applicable legislation,
- on the basis of data that a firm provides about itself voluntarily.

The level of detail of data is largely indirectly proportional to the number of firms on which the data is available. Databases based on official registers as a rule cover comprehensively all business entities in the respective country, but contain only data that may be published pursuant to applicable legislation. Databases based on data collected by questionnaires or another method on a voluntary basis may contain much more data, but this data is never provided by all respondents.

Information reduces the risk incurred by the recipient in its planned actions. In order for this aim to be fulfilled thoroughly, it is not enough simply to obtain the information, it is necessary to process it, evaluate it and implement it in decision-making. In processing the information, however there must feature precise, reliable information, i.e. that fulfilling certain rules:

- it is verified from several sources,
- the specific source and date (possibly also time) for which the information is binding is known.

The information may be verified either by the user itself or this activity may be undertaken by a specialised office.

Marketing and credit information

The group of users of corporate information may be characterised as being diverse, since everyone having an interest in obtaining information on firms

has different reasons for doing so. A market subject needs information primarily for business (searching for and checking business partners) and marketing (monitoring competitors, customer potential). As a rule the information may be of interest:

- either at the basic level – marketing, or office (contact) information,
- or expanded – credit, financial or commercial information.

Marketing information represents a set of data that characterises a firm so that it is possible to differentiate it from other firms and enable a business contact to be tied up. This data concerns primarily identification and other registration information, which is supplemented so that the information provides a basic idea of the existence and activity, and possibly also the size of the firm. The registration data contains, importantly, the exact name of the business, identification number (if assigned), address, contact person and their address, telephone and e-mail contact to the firm, and the firm's website address. The firm's line of business may be expressed as a description or industrial branch classification, or other system of classification. Size is given by the number of employees and sometimes also by financial data, as a rule annual earnings or the economic result, or share capital. Other valuable information is also whether the firm is an exporter or importer of goods or services. Information offices providing this type service gather together data on a client principle (membership principle), where they offer clients (members) various possibilities of presentation.

Credit information may be considered to be all analytically processed information that creates an integrated report, concluded by a comprehensive evaluation of the given business subject's creditworthiness. Such information is often of a confidential nature with regard to its source, as well as to the fact that credit information is requested by a firm that needs to evaluate another firm. Credit information is usually provided by specialised credit offices¹.

¹ This is not to be confused with a rating, since the assignment of a rating is requested from the rating agency by the rated firm itself, voluntarily, for this purpose it provides information on itself, where the rating evaluation is public.

Foreign information offices providing data on Slovak firms

The segmentation of information into marketing and credit information is a standard procedure in market economies. Specialised offices providing these types of information have gradually extended the scope of their activities also to transforming economies, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe. Providers of marketing information operating in Slovakia are, for example, the companies European Databank (EDB) and Kompass. Providers of credit information include the companies Coface, Intercre-

dit and Creditreform; the company Dun & Bradstreet has offices only in the Czech Republic, but gathers and provides information also on Slovak firms.

The table shows basic data on selected products and their products, in which information on Slovak firms is available.

Extent of data in the databases of various information offices

The extent of databases that information offices administer varies considerably. Providers of marketing information differentiate between information on

Information offices					
Scope of activity	Marketing Information		Credit Information		
Name of company	EDB	Kompass	Coface Intercredit	Creditreform	Dun & Bradstreet
Country of origin	Sweden	Switzerland	France and Austria	Germany	USA
Content of the databases, range of outputs and description of other activity					
Marketing information	x	x	x	x	x
Credit information	–	–	x	x	x
Output	Verified information for tying up business contacts		Trade credit information	Financial information	BIR – Business Information Report
Essence of evaluation	–	–	Risk points (100 – 699), 11 intervals	Risk points (100 – 600), 6 degrees	Rating D&B, Paydex (0 – 100)
Language	In total 12	In total 21	Local language, English, German		
Term of delivery of outputs	Immediately	Immediately	Standard (6 days), Expres (3 days), Immediate (1 days)	Normal ² (8 days), Quick (3 days), Immediate (8 hours)	Zones 0, 1, 2, 3
Marketing service ³	x	x	x	x	x
Electronic monitoring ⁴	x	x	x	x	x
On-line internet	PROODLE ⁵	KOMPASS ⁶	ICON	BIGNET	WORLDBASE
Databases on CD ROM	2x yearly	2x yearly ⁷	x	x	x ⁸
International presence	x	x	x	x	x
Direct debiting of receivables	–	–	x	x	–
Other products and services ⁹	Regional response centres	System for electronic contacting	Macroeconomic development and country risks	Insolvency in countries, other ¹⁰	Macroeconomic development and country risks

² If the firm is in the system, the information is available on a real-time basis. If not, in the SR the stated terms apply.

³ One-time output – selection of data from the database.

⁴ Regular output – sending the selected information.

⁵ The European database group Bonnier Business Information. Fewer subjects (only from the SR, CR, Hungary and Poland). The database BBIEuro includes at least the database of firms in the SR (CD-ROM Large Slovak Businesses).

⁶ Makes available databases from several continents, including Europe.

⁷ Under the title EEKOD (East European Kompass on Disc) and

SKKOD (Slovak Kompass on Disc).

⁸ DBCS (The marketing database of firms from the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic), DBPL (Large Polish Businesses), DBHP (Large Hungarian Businesses), DBCE (Central and Eastern Europe), DBEU (Western Europe).

⁹ Some information offices, among other things, operate also as sub-suppliers of information to business information systems or to database centres.

¹⁰ Products of the Belgian company Bureau van Dijk, MARKUS, DAFNE – databases of marketing and corporate information on German and Russian firms, “direct” database marketing information on the European Companies.



paying and non-paying clients (members). A paying client (member) is presented in the information system, for the respective fee, in a uniform system structure, where it may use various levels (packages) of presentation services and has the option of obtaining outputs also on non-paying clients (members). As a rule either only all information on paying clients (members) or only a certain degree of information on paying and non-paying clients is available for free to a non-paying client. Providers of marketing information enable paying clients (members) to update the data on their firm in the database themselves, therefore the address and telephone contacts in the database are as a rule very up to date, but the number of subjects for which the data is available is lower.

The providers of credit information focus in particular on juridical persons – commercial companies, not on natural persons – entrepreneurs. The basis of the databases are formed by data from publicly available sources (public registers, journals, monitoring of the press). Firms on which credit information is being provided possibly may also be contacted directly; their verified data may serve for supplementing information from public sources. Where information offices focus also on the direct debiting of receivables, such information is also a component of the output. This type of output contains current contacts, because the basis of each output report is a verification of the business subject in the commercial register.

Criteria for searching data and the manner of obtaining outputs from the databases of information offices

Since all information offices, without exception, provide information from various territories, the basic and singular criterion for searching for data on one firm is its name, supplemented by the country in which it operates, possibly also the town. For the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, the national identifier has been retained, this being the identification number (IČ). A search may, however, also be made according to size criteria, i.e. according to turnover and the number of employees.

For searching for data on multiple companies, i.e. a marketing service, as a rule, with the aim of tying up a business contact, the basic and singular criterion is the line of business according to the international classification (ISIC), or the classification systems applicable in the EU (NACE, SKP), in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic this is OKEČ (Branch Classification of Economic Activities).

Information offices enable the client to outputs

from their databases on the basis of a pre-paid form of credit either online or upon request. Marketing information providers publish databases also on CD-ROM, so that their users can export the necessary data and utilise it further.

Description of outputs from information office databases

Marketing information provided by selected information offices, focused largely also on e-business, contains basic data (e.g. the name of the business, registered office, telephone and e-mail contact), an expanded range of information, or general information (the year of establishment, number of employees, description of activity or code of activity, if the products and services are not in categories), information on the owners and management, press reports, quality certificates, products and services that the company presents (codes), or the business's activity (a written description), product pictures.

The names of the analytical outputs in the individual companies providing credit information vary. Usually they concern general information on the firm, financial data, other data and data concerning creditworthiness. The general data includes, among other things, also the marketing (contact) information: identification of the company, address and telephone and/or e-mail contact, description of the line of business, rating assigned, management, partners, ownership structure, shareholdings in other companies, other publicly available information, business partners, organisational structure, cooperating banks. Financial data includes data from financial statements - assets, liabilities, receivables, investments, economic results, earnings, share capital, capital structure, and bank loans. Other data covers the most up-to-date information from the press, legal events, historical data, etc. In conclusion an analytical report contains an evaluation of a business entity's creditworthiness (a creditworthiness index) and an evaluation of payment discipline, or the recommended amount of credit.

The output value of the creditworthiness index represents a sum of partial evaluations of selected factors; where the creditworthiness index is higher, the greater the risk ensuing from tying up business contacts. The point-based evaluation is accompanied by a written evaluation of the creditworthiness. A score of up to 130 (150) points represents an excellent degree of credit worthiness (an excellent financial situation). Conversely, a score of up to 600 (699) points indicates a high risk of bankruptcy (the business link is rejected). The scale of creditworthi-

Information source – name	Firemný monitor	Infinet	Univerzálny register SR	Amadeus	Trend Top	B4Bpublic. info	Infosystém Slovakia plus	Epi.sk	Obvest	Websites of court executors of the SR	Yellow Pages
Information source – provider ¹¹	Albertina data	Infin	Emel Bratislava	Buerau van Dijk	Trend Holding	Coram Publico	EuroPrint	Poradca podnikateľa	Junkers software	Prvá Bánovská Informačná	Mediatel
RES	x	x	x	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-
Commercial Journal – entries and changes	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	-
Commercial Journal (CJ)	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	x	-	-
Collection of documents CJ ¹²	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public Procurement Journal (PPJ)	x	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	-
Journals other than CJ and PPJ	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	-	-
Digest of Laws	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	-	-
Info. from the Central Depository (CD)	-	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Data from the capital market	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bankruptcies (CJ or courts)	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-
Financial indicators – firm	x	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-
Financial indicators – sector	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Info. on non-fulfilment liabilities	x	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Payment information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Export of data (firm or entry)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	-
Export of data – mass	x	-	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	-
Press reports	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Software – standard application	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	-
Software – special application	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	x
Press monitoring	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketing service	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-
Electronic monitoring	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
On-line internet	x	x	x	-	-	x	-	-	-	x	x
Databases on CD-ROM	x	-	-	x	x	-	x	x	x	-	x
International presence	x	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x

¹¹ For reasons of space, the legal form of the company has been omitted.

¹² For selected companies, not all, which have filed reports in the Collection of Documents.



ness evaluation corresponds also to the evaluation scale of payment ability and credit.

Credit information providers offer also the electronic monitoring of companies whose creditworthiness they are evaluating for a client. They monitor the development and notify of changes to the data of selected firms as a rule over the course of 12 months.

Commercial databases available in the Slovak Republic

Commercial information products have arisen gradually also in our economic environment. Somewhere between office and credit information there exists a certain specific type of information that we may term either expanded office, or narrow credit information. This is information containing everything that falls under the meaning of office information, but is supplemented by public data from financial statements, from which financial ratio indicators are calculated, and in several cases compared also to the sector's parameters. This information, in contrast to credit information, does not contain a qualitative evaluation of the subject (with the exception of Univerzálny register SR), but provides only a basis for drawing up such an evaluation, under the precondition that the basic connections between the items of the financial statements are re-checked. Information on the non-fulfilment of liabilities may also be a component of the information product (a sub-database), similarly as information on the declaration of bankruptcy or entry into liquidation. Some of the providers of commercial sources offer the possibility of implementing selected data directly into the client's information system.

The following table shows basic data on selected information products available in the SR. Their focus is varied, and therefore are coloured differently, creating several groups.

The first group comprises products that are intended to provide in one place the most comprehensive information possible from all available sources on registered subjects in the Slovak Republic. These include sources available online via the internet that have been established directly in the Slovak Republic and have been on the market for a relatively short time: Infinet and Univerzálny register SR, as well as the Albertina Firemný monitor, which started life in the Czech Republic. The information base of these products is to a certain extent the same (public registers, journals), each of them however also has a certain "added value" over another ranked in the same group. Infinet makes data available in the ori-

ginal published form, as well as data that has undergone a check of compliance of its functional links in financial statements, where financial ratio indicators are calculated only from data that pass this check. At the same time, it provides updated descriptions of sectors and thereby enables the standing of a specific firm in the sector to be determined. A specific feature of the product is information from the capital market and data on the structure of the owners and their other shareholdings from an official source. The added value of the Univerzálny register SR product is data on the non-fulfilment of liabilities obtained with a varying frequency of up-dating on the basis of contractual relationships from commercial companies as well as state institutions in the SR. A special feature of the product is the rating assigned to the subject with regard to its ability and willingness to repay liabilities, as well as access to data, using WAP technology. The company Albertina data offers information via the internet, the same information is, however, available also as a component of a special software application that enables criteria-based and full-text searching and the mass-export of data.

Databases with information on selected subjects

A certain subset of the preceding group comprises products that do not contain information on all registered subjects; they focus only on commercial companies, as a rule only the most important in the sector. In the application Amadeus data from the

Criteria for evaluating information products¹³

Criterion	Test
Content	Is it sufficient (exhaustive)? Is there no duplication of existing sources? What is the quality of the data? Is the data accurate? Is the source extensive, recognised? How frequently is it updated?
Access to data	Is the range of criteria sufficient? Is it easy to use? Is it possible to perform quick information searches? Is the product cost-effective?
Product functionality	Is functional stability ensured? Is the product attractive? Do errors occur due to omissions?
Origin of data	Are the data sources reliable (trustworthy)? Are the data sources legitimate? Does the data provider have a good reputation?

¹³ M. Burke, H. Hall: Navigating businesses information sources, Library Association Publishing, London 1998.



Commercial Journal is available, which is supplied by a sub-supplier. Trend Holding gathers the data via questionnaires. Amadeus is also a strong analytical instrument, containing data in the same structure from several European countries, enabling them to be searched on the basis of various criteria, as well as to be aggregated and financial and statistical analyses to be processed. The Trend Top databases contain financial data only in a limited extent, but where this is relatively up to date. In the databases of the company Trend Holding the user can find data that is not in other information sources, for example the number of subjects in the consolidated group, the number of employees and the specific industrial branch classification.

Databases on the basis of specific modules

A further group comprises information products that as a rule try to make available in specific modules all accessible information on registered subjects, in essence with the aim of providing information on the existence of a subject, on changes that have occurred, possibly information that it has published. Mostly these concern the modules: the Register of Organisations, the Commercial Journal, the Public Procurement Journal and the Digest of Laws, which may be accessible individually or are mutually interconnected. In individual products the modules are various and most frequently made available as a CD-ROM application, with the updating of data via the internet.

Databases with marketing information

The last group comprises information products from which marketing information may be gained. This type of information is provided in the SR by, besides foreign information offices, Mediatel, which publishes the telephone directory, the Yellow Pages (Zlaté stránky) in printed form for all the regions of Slovakia.

The importance of non-commercial and commercial sources of corporate data

Public information sources and commercial databases open up the business environment, allowing business contacts to be tied up and business partners to be checked, together with non-public sources serving as an instrument for reducing risks. The online accessibility of public sources via the internet, often for free, as well as the expanding range of commercial products created in the SR on the market contribute to greater transparency of the business environment, which is a precondition for the arrival of foreign investors as well as for tying up business relations with firms not only from European Union countries, but also from other territories. There remains still, given their relatively short history, a certain problem as regards the quality, reliability and currency of information in public sources as well as commercial products, therefore it is recommended to compare information from various sources.