Getting started with BoardEx

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What’s the plan?

- Further support
- How to access BoardEx & some considerations
- Possibilities and limitations of the dataset
- Structure of the dataset
- Get started: create your own dataset of companies and find directors
- Tips, possible alternatives and additional data
Further support

- Contact me for short questions by mail or to make an appointment: m.gubbels@ubn.ru.nl
- Always mention: topic, supervisor and desired variables & historical timeframe
- Visit our office: 01.545 (next to MSc)
- Consult our Library Guide (https://libguides.ru.nl/BE) for an overview of our databases, upcoming workshops etc.

BoardEx: access & considerations

- The BoardEx data is available in Excel workbooks, stored on a secure server
- You can get access by sending a request to: m.gubbels@ubn.ru.nl
- The server is available off-campus, details will be provided when you request access
- The files are read-only, but can be transferred to your own device in order to work with them
- The files are quite big, so use a computer that can handle this
BoardEx: access & considerations

- BoardEx contains personal information, hence the license terms for usage are very strict.
- Users are prohibited to share BoardEx data with non-RU staff or students.
- When using BoardEx data you are responsible for safe storage. Use an encrypted device, transfer files by safe, RU provided means (no DropBox!), do not store them locally on public computers etc…
- See for further reference & safe means of data storage and transfer: http://www.ru.nl/privacy/english/data/

BoardEx: possibilities & limitations

BoardEx data enables you to study e.g.:

- Board composition & size
- Compensation details of CEOs
- Inter-company networks
- Board interlocks

Data is available on both executives and higher management (SMEDs)
BoardEx: possibilities & limitations

- The RU subscribes to the following BoardEx datasets: company details, director profiles, compensation, director networks, company networks, and announcements.

- Coverage: Europe and the UK only

- Timeframe: 1999-2017, updated twice a year – hence the data is static. Last update: November 2017

- Data from the first couple of years covers less companies

- An overview of the variables per dataset and details on coverage is available on the server (BoardEx Core Reports Data Dictionary).

Please note that this document mentions other datasets (to which we not subscribe) als well!

BoardEx: possibilities & limitations

- Compensation data after 2009 is only available for directors of companies active on these indices: FTSE, Stoxx Europe 50, DAX, CAC, and S&P 500 and NASDAQ 100 (European & UK companies only).

- The name of the auditing firm of a company is not historically available in BoardEx

- BoardEx does not always cover smaller listed firms, nor an extensive amount of private companies

- Board composition and size must be calculated based on the data

- Using BoardEx efficiently requires some Excel skills
BoardEx: structure of the dataset

- The BoardEx data is divided in 2 sections: Europe and UK
- Both sections contain 3 company based segments: ‘Announcements’, ‘Company profiles’ and ‘Company networks’
- Both sections contain 4 director based and 4 senior management based segments
- These break down in 4 parts: ‘Director profile’, ‘Director compensation’ and ‘Director network’

Networks are defined by overlap in function or employer

- A network between 2 companies is established when a director maintains/maintained a function at both firms
- A network between 2 directors is defined when they received their education at the same institution, worked for the same firm or share(d) other (semi-professional) activities

- Both companies and directors have unique BoardEx codes: ‘ID’s’, you'll need these to gather the data
- Usually you start by retrieving company ID’s

Please note that what now follows is a personal workflow for the first steps using BoardEx – it is possible to retrieve BoardEx data in other ways
Defining your dataset

Start in ‘Company profiles’ to get the BoardEx company ID’s you need

Filter the list in place (e.g. on country or sector)

Text filters, like ‘contains’ can be convenient here

Note that that data is static, so filtering on index or revenues is not useful

OR use a list of companies you already obtained elsewhere – depending on your topic

Case: Dutch currently publicly listed companies, list obtained from Eikon

Here, ISIN codes are the most reliable filter to define the BoardEx dataset, because they are unique (company names can be spelled in a different fashion, e.g. ‘SAINT GOBAIN’ vs ‘COMPAGNIE DE ST-GOBAIN SA’)

In this case you’ll need an advanced filter
Defining your dataset

Step 1

Create a new sheet in your copy of 'Company profiles' and paste the ISIN-codes there.

Use truncation (*) to make sure you find all the ISIN-codes, even when there are more in one cell, e.g. NL0000440477 -> *NL0000440477*

Make 2 columns with * in every cell by using the fill handle.

Use the CONCATENATE function to do this for one code and use fill handle to drag it downwards and apply to all ISIN-codes.
Defining your dataset

Step 2

Create a new sheet (e.g. ‘filtered data’) -> copy-paste the headings of the company profile sheet there

Paste the truncated ISIN-codes (as values) in the appropriate column

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Defining your dataset

Step 3

Open the advanced filter from the sheet where you just pasted the ISIN-codes (here called ‘filtered data’)

Choose ‘copy to another location’ and select all cells (incl. headers) on the ‘Company Profiles’ sheet (ctrl+A) as list range
Defining your dataset

Select the cells with the ISIN-codes (incl. header) in the ‘filtered data’ sheet as criteria and select a row with as many cells as there are headers as ‘copy to’ destination

Now, Excel filters the ‘Company profiles’ sheet on your criteria.

Copy-paste the BoardEx Company ID’s in a new sheet or workbook and you have your dataset defined
Search for the variables

The next step depends on your topic and the variables you need!

In general:

- Use the company ID’s to find the connected director ID’s in the ‘Director profile – employment’ file with an advanced filter (for both historical and current employment)
- Use either the company ID’s or the director ID’s to reconstruct the networks in the company and/or director networks files
- Use the company ID’s in the director profile files to be able to calculate variables like board or committee size
- Personal variables like age, gender etc. can be found in the ‘Director profile – characteristics’ file
- Director and SMDEs network files are based on the position of the person, so someone can be in both files, depending on her/his previous functions

Tips:

- Please not that not every dataset includes ISIN-codes
- First try to figure out the structure of the BoardEx dataset before you start working – this may increase efficiency
- Create your template for panel data beforehand, so you can let Excel do the work for you with its functions (e.g. VLOOKUP, SUMIF etc.)
- Make local copies of the BoardEx files you need, so can create working sheets to filter and process the data step by step
- Make sure you backup everything and store it in a secure place
- Team-up with fellow students if possible
Possible alternatives & additional data

- **Orbis** contains board data as well, but this is highly impractical (and possibly incomplete) for reconstructing historical board composition etc.

- **Eikon-Datastream** (Excel version) contains some board-related data with a focus on CSR and governance, but for a limited amount of companies per country and not so extensive as BoardEx.

- Company reports in **Eikon** (desktop) and **Thomson One** contain some compensation data, but this needs to be gathered manually and historical coverage is thin.

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Possible alternatives & additional data

- Use the Excel version of **Eikon** (or otherwise **Orbis**) to gather additional financials, ratio’s etc.

- Historical audit firms of a company can be gathered from **Eikon** desktop.

- In all cases you’ll need the **ISIN-codes** of the companies!

- If necessary, historical M&A data can be gathered from Thomson One, Eikon desktop, Zephyr or M&A Catalyst.