

BOFIT Online
2005 No. 13

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BOFIT web site user survey 2005



Bank of Finland, BOFIT
Institute for Economies in Transition

BOFIT Online
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BOFIT Online 13/2005

Tiina Saajasto: BOFIT web site user survey 2005
28.12.2005

ISSN 1456-811X (online)

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The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bank of Finland.

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BOFIT web site user survey 2005

Abstract

The Bank of Finland Institute for Economies in Transition (BOFIT) conducted a web site user survey on its web pages between the periods 23 May – 9 September 2005. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the use of BOFIT's web site and the sufficiency of its contents, and to request suggestions for improvement. The general impression was that BOFIT's web site is visited on a fairly regular basis and that the users seem relatively satisfied with the site. The users gave good suggestions for additional improvements.

The survey results will be used for further developing BOFIT's web site.

Key words: BOFIT, web site, user survey

Many thanks for all respondents

BOFIT

Introduction

The web site of the Bank of Finland Institute for Economies in Transition (BOFIT) at www.bof.fi/bofit is directed towards readers interested in Russia and China, the countries that the institution focuses on. BOFIT's particular areas of interest cover economic development, economic policy, structural changes, financial sector and general governmental developments, and changes in the operational environment for companies in these countries. The web site provides reporting on the monitoring of Russian and Chinese economies in weekly, monthly and quarterly publications together with studies on related issues to transition economies.

BOFIT conducted a web site user survey on its web pages between the periods 23 May – 9 September 2005. The survey questionnaire was drawn up with the same contents in both Finnish and English. The purpose was to collect background information on the type of users of BOFIT's web site, to determine their Internet usage habits and needs with regards to the contents of the site, and to request any suggestions for improvement.

BOFIT received 436 responses in total to the survey. The majority of the questions were multiple-choice questions with a list of given alternatives. Responses to them ranged between 409 and 436. Responses to open questions, allowing participants to respond in their own words, were considerably lower in number. Questions and given responses are discussed later in more detail.

The survey was accessible through several links on the BOFIT's web site. There was a link to both the Finnish and English questionnaire in a clearly visible place on the home page. In addition to the home page, there was a link to only the Finnish questionnaire on 'BOFIT Viikkokatsaus' page. The English questionnaire was accessible through the 'Monitoring' and the 'Publications' pages.

In addition to BOFIT's web site, the user survey was mentioned, and a link to the questionnaire attached, in email messages used for distributing BOFIT economic reviews to readers. There was also a link to the questionnaire, twice, in BOFIT Alert messages informing on new surveys published.

The results of the survey have been analysed with the survey program printout and a spreadsheet program. The questionnaire is included.

Survey results

Readers of BOFIT's web site

Information on the readership of BOFIT's web site was gathered by asking the following: in what role do readers visit the site, where do they work, their profession/position and their place of residence.

The question '**What is your user-role when visiting the BOFIT's web site?**' offered the following alternative user groups: private citizen; authority employee/representative; company or organisation employee; media representative; researcher; student or school pupil; some other role, what?

Nearly half of the visitors, ie 215 respondents, were company or organisation employees. With 75 visitors, researchers were the second largest user group. Over 60 persons visited the web site as authority employees/representatives. Close to 10% of the respondents visited the web site in some other role (including translators, pensioners, private citizens, teachers and representatives of civic organisations).

The question '**Where do you work?**' gave the following alternatives: research institution; university; financial institution; official agency; media organisation; elected post/party organisation; labour organisation; employer organisation; firm; other, please specify.

Persons working in firms were the largest individual user group with nearly 150 visitors. The following largest user groups were persons working in universities or official agencies. Users who selected 'other, please specify' named: private person, translator, pensioner, or civic organisation.

The question '**Your profession/position?**' was presented for clarifying readers' position in their own organisation. The given alternatives for professions and related positions were: director/leading position; senior manager/specialist; middle manager; employee; private entrepreneur; student/school pupil; pensioner; farmer; housewife/househusband; unemployed; other, what? The results showed that almost 80% of respondents were directors/leading position, senior managers/specialists or middle managers.

Private entrepreneurs, students/school pupils and pensioners were also relatively active users of the BOFIT's web site. There were no unemployed or housewives/househusbands among the respondents. The largest user group choosing the alternative 'other, what' were professors/university lecturers.

The alternatives to question ‘**Your place of residence?**’ are shown in the table below. The distribution of responses reveals that the majority of BOFIT’s web site readership lives in southern Finland, capital city region or towns with a population over 50,000. Under 30% of respondents gave a place of residence outside of Finland.

Place of residence	Number of respondents
Capital city region (Greater Helsinki)	207
Other town in Finland, population over 50,000	52
Other town in Finland, population under 50,000	39
Other community in Finland	18
Other EU country (not Finland)	65
Russia	17
Other Europe (not EU country)	7
North-America	20
China	6
Japan	1
Latin America, Australia, Romania, Israel	7

Respondents’ Internet usage habits

The respondents were asked how often they used BOFIT’s web site and the Internet in general.

‘How often do you visit the BOFIT’s web pages?’ The participants visited BOFIT’s web site relatively often; over 70% of the respondents visited the site several times a month. The majority of the respondents, ie 185 persons, visited the site 1–3 times a month. 127 respondents visited the site once a week or more frequently.

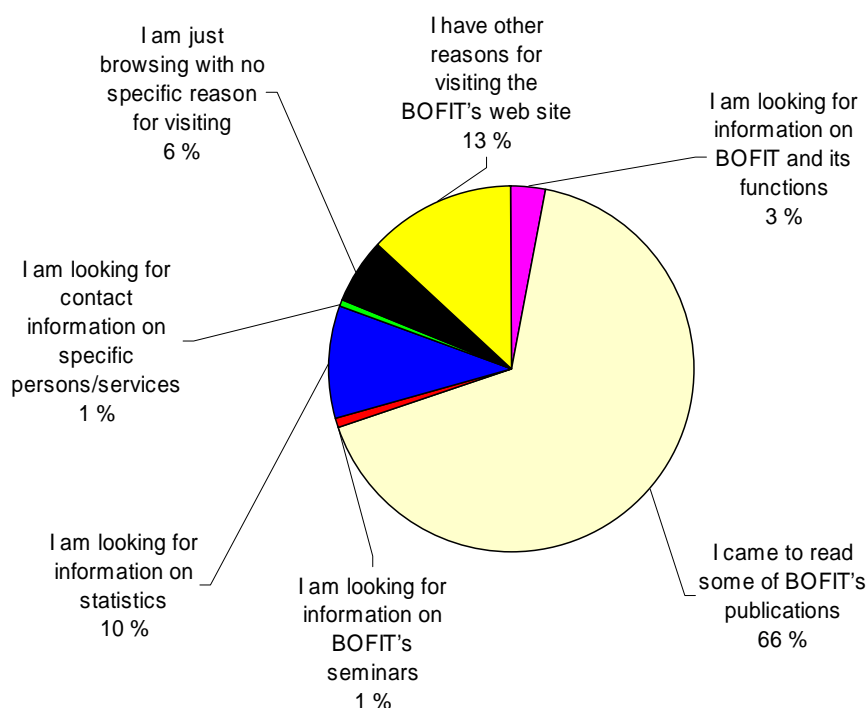
4.4% of the respondents (19 persons) were visiting the site for the first time. These respondents probably belong to the group of readers who subscribe to BOFIT’s economic reviews and publications through email, and who in these messages, received a link to the survey with the request to take part in it. They have been satisfied with the service received through email and had therefore no need to visit the BOFIT’s web site earlier.

Responses to the question **‘How often do you use the Internet?’** revealed that BOFIT’s web site readers are fairly active in using the Internet in general. 422 participants (97%) informed that they use the Internet almost daily.

How do readers use BOFIT's web site?

The questions below were presented to find out how BOFIT's web site is used, what information the readers are searching for from the site and whether they found what they were looking for.

The choice of answers to the multiple-choice question '**Why are you visiting BOFIT's web site this time?**' and the distribution of answers given are shown in the following chart:



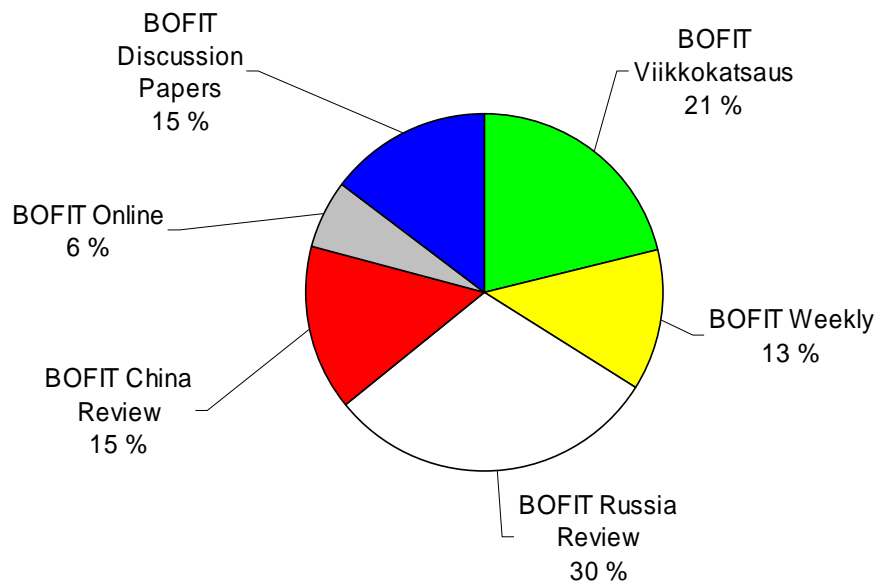
With 280 persons (about 70%), the majority of respondents reported they had visited to read BOFIT's publications.

The question '**Do you read BOFIT's publications from our web site**' could be answered by choosing 'yes' or 'no'. The majority of respondents (83%) read BOFIT publications directly on the web site.

The alternative responses to question '**Do you download or read BOFIT's publications from our web site?**' were 'yes', 'no' or 'sometimes'. The majority of respondents (47%) always downloaded or read publications from the site, 39% answered with 'sometimes' and 14% never downloaded or read BOFIT publications.

The question ‘**Which BOFIT publications do you read/download from our web site?**’ was presented to find out which of the publications available on the BOFIT web site the visitors read most frequently. The respondents could choose between BOFIT survey and review publications.

The respondents could choose one or several alternatives simultaneously.

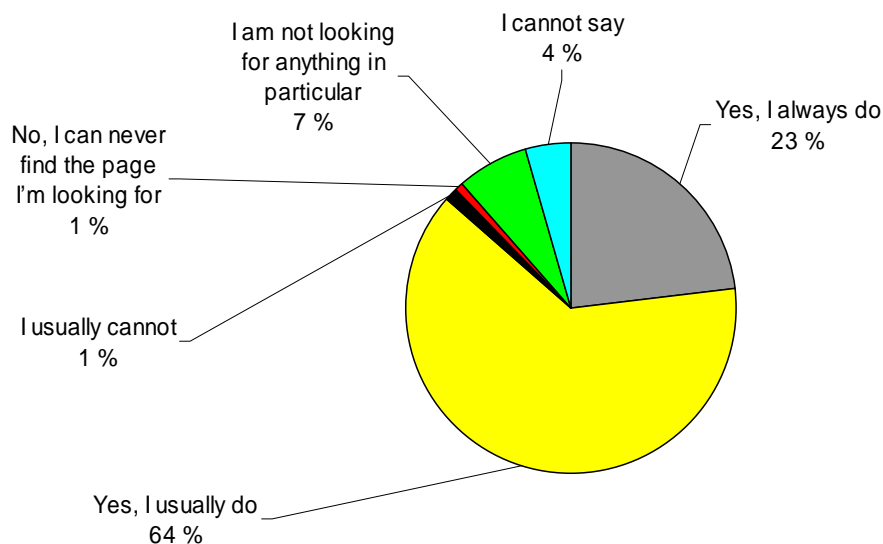


‘BOFIT Viikkokatsaus’ and its English equivalent ‘BOFIT Weekly’, which focus on economic development in Russia and China, had the largest readership. Their total readership equalled about one third of all respondents. With 30% of the respondents, ‘BOFIT Russia Review’ was the most frequently read individual publication.

A significant number of BOFIT’s web site users read more than one BOFIT publication, since the total number of hits within the question was over one thousand whereas 482 participants answered the question.

Sufficiency of information and ability to find it on BOFIT's web site

The respondents answered to the question **'Did you find the pages you were looking for in our web site?'** as follows:



The majority of the respondents (almost 90%) said that they 'always' or 'usually' find the page they are looking for.

Responses to alternatives 'No, I can never find the page I'm looking for' and 'I usually cannot' could be specified by answering the question **'What did you not succeed in finding?'** The respondents could write freely what they were looking for but could not find. There were 19 answers to this question. The various of respondents had been looking for statistical data, exchange rates, stock prices, long-term interest rates, RTS index, survey data on CIS countries or information on the development of corporate and business sectors.

The question **'How useful are the BOFIT's pages to you?'** could be answered by choosing one of the following alternatives: extremely useful; fairly useful; not particularly useful; not useful at all; I cannot say.

There were in all 431 responses to this question. Almost 90% of the respondents considered the web site fairly (63%) or extremely (27%) useful. One respondent regarded the site as not useful at all.

The question ‘**Can you identify any essential information/details that you consider to be missing from the BOFIT’s web site contents**’ was an open questions allowing participants to respond in their own words.

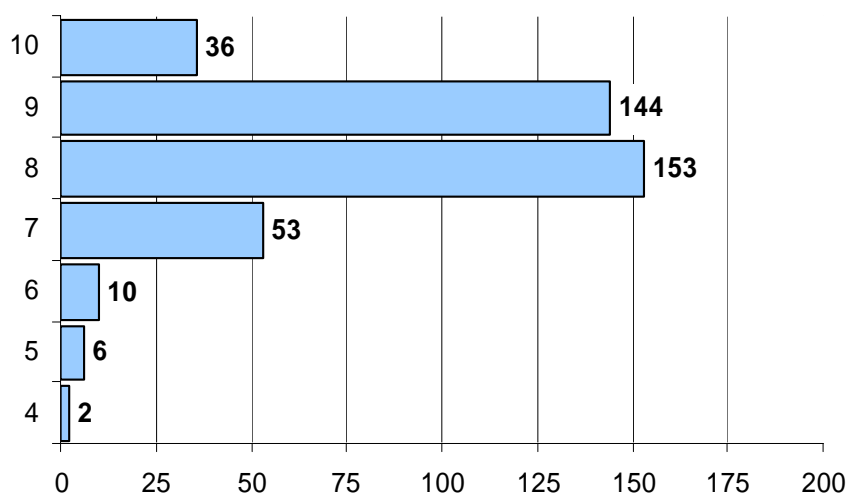
There were 58 responses to this question. 35% of the respondents found that there was no essential information missing from the site. 16% wished that the site contained more statistical data, 6% missed forecasts, 3% stock prices and 5% information on Carelia.

Other hoped for additions included: BOFIT’s web site in Russian, articles written by Russians, reviews on books related to BOFIT’s fields of study, monitoring of economic developments in the former COMECON countries, monitoring of economic development, energy-related issues and environmental development in CIS countries and Ukraine in particular, Finnish investments to transition economies, operations of foreign monetary institutions operating in Russia, developments in industrial prices in Russia and China, monitoring of the Indian economy, situation with WTO, information on railway tariffs, who’s who in Russia and daily news.

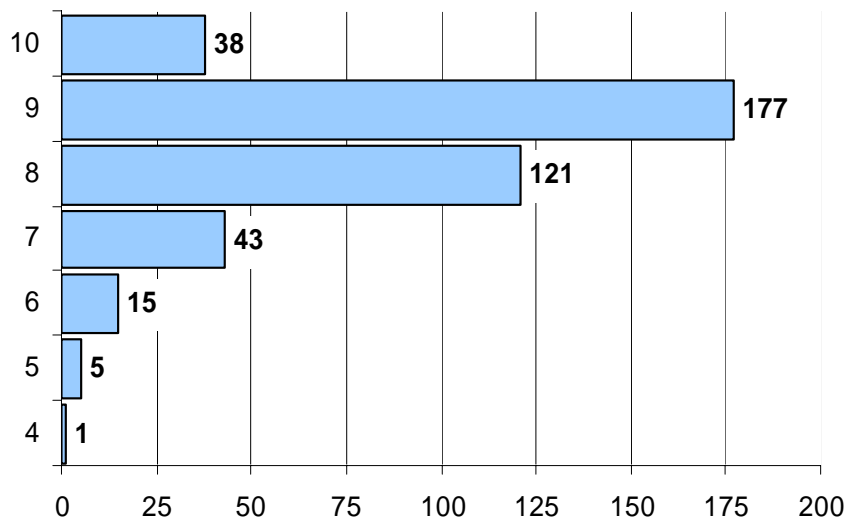
Satisfaction with BOFIT’s web site

Respondents’ satisfaction with BOFIT’s web site was measured with five questions. There were in all 409 responses to these questions. Respondents were asked to grade their satisfaction with the web site’s individual characteristics on a scale between 4 and 10, where 4 = weak, 5–6 = fair, 7–8 = satisfactory and 9–10 = excellent.

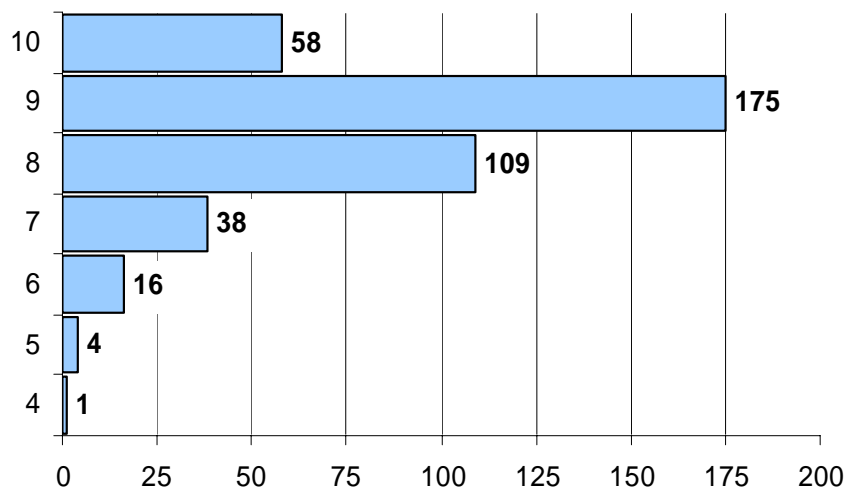
The average grade for **appearance and layout of web site** was 8.3. Of the respondents, 45% graded the web site’s appearance and layout as excellent and 50% considered it satisfactory. Two respondents gave a grade of 4.



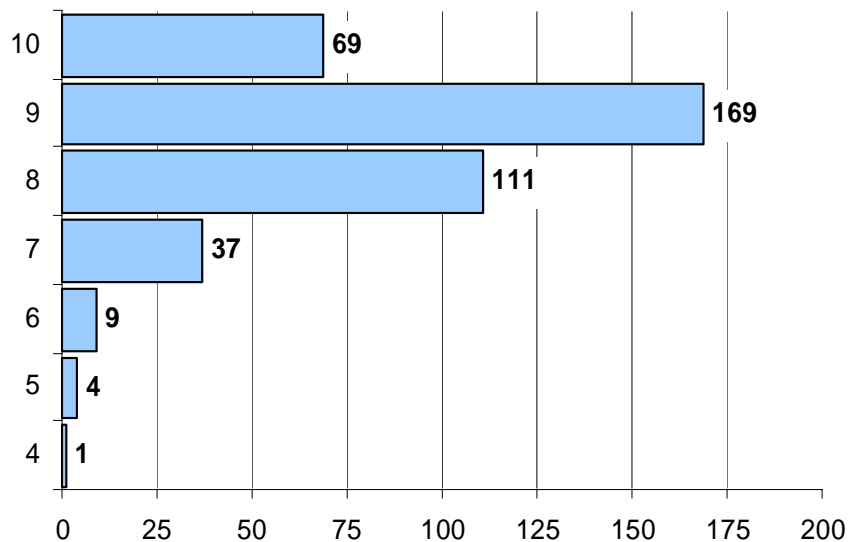
The average grade for **technical application** was 8.4. Almost 55% of the respondents graded the technical application of the web site as excellent. Little over 40% graded it as satisfactory. Only one user gave the grade of 4.



Accessibility got the average grade of 8.5. Almost 60% graded the accessibility as excellent and one third as satisfactory. Only one user gave the grade of 4.

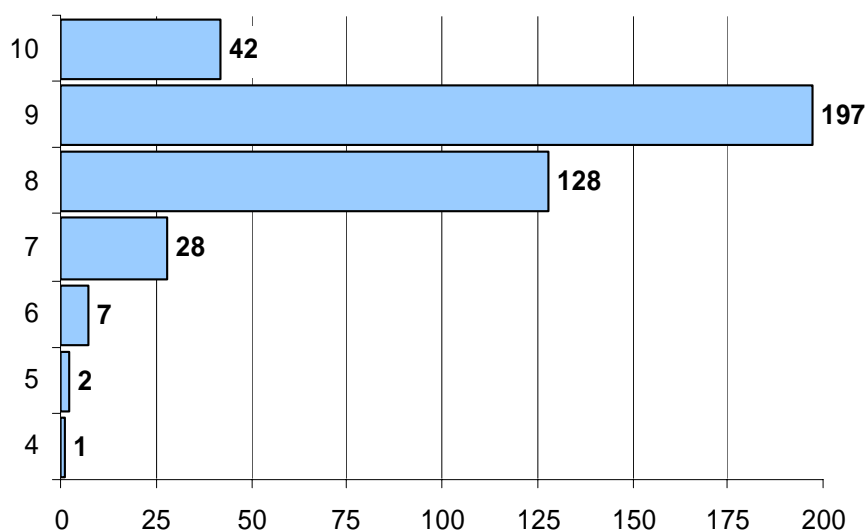


Applicability and usefulness: average grade was 8.6. A little under 60% considered the applicability and usefulness of the web site as excellent. A little under 40% graded them as satisfactory. Only one respondent regarded the site as not useful.



The average grade for **overall satisfaction** was 8.6. Almost 60% of the respondent gave the grade of excellent for their overall satisfaction with BOFIT's web site. 38% of the respondents gave the grade of satisfactory. Only one user gave the grade of 4.

The average grade for overall satisfaction is quite high, considering readers' suggestions on improving the application and the contents of the site.



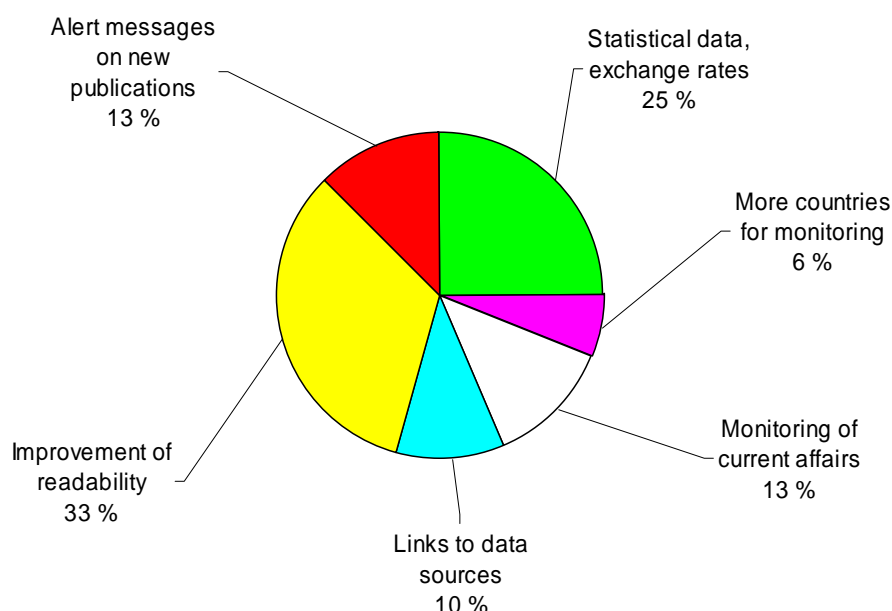
Suggestions for improvement and comments for web site administrators

Over 100 responses were given to free-answer questions concerning suggestions for improvement and other comments.

There were 62 responses to the question **‘Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the BOFIT’s Internet services?’** The responses can be divided in six groups. The distributions of responses within them are shown in the chart below.

One fourth of the respondents suggested that there could be information on exchange rates and investments as well as statistical data and data on foreign trade statistics.

10% of participants wished for lists of links to source data used on BOFIT’s web site. 13% hoped for better monitoring of current affairs and more active updating of the site. Participants suggested that, in addition to Russia, BOFIT could also monitor the economy in other CIS countries. Readers were also interested in economic development in India and economic cooperation between Russia and EU countries.



One third of the respondents wanted to improve the on-screen reading of publications. As an example readers named ‘BOFIT Viikkokatsaus’. Participants hoped that the weekly news opened directly from the titles given on screen. They requested that the titles be given in the email messages for distributing the ‘BOFIT Viikkokatsaus’. The respondents also suggested that BOFIT could give up sending publications as appendices in pdf form; rather, respondents wanted to read them directly in the email message space. Respondents wished that there were more links between review publications and clearer information architecture. They suggested that the site contained a publication order form.

Part of the respondents suggested the introduction of an Alert function: an email message being sent to readers whenever a new publication was added to the BOFIT web site. As to BOFIT Online, some readers found it regrettable that part of the publications within the series were only available in Finnish.

Participants hoped that BOFIT would make use of the possibilities granted by IT – video tapings and interviews. They also suggested discussion forums for various interest groups on the BOFIT web site. One of the respondents expressed their interest in meeting BOFIT researchers and discussing with them.

BOFIT web site administrators and developers received 41 responses to the question **‘What other comments or suggestions would you like to send to the persons editing and developing this web site?’**

30% of the respondents found that the site didn’t require any changing or developing. The current site was good and functional.

The majority of respondents thanked BOFIT for their excellent service, their concise and readable review publications and their years of good work. A few responses were suggestions for development, and were taken into consideration together with responses to the question ‘do you have any suggestions for improvement of the BOFIT’s Internet services’.

Conclusions

The users of BOFIT’s web site are relatively satisfied with the contents of the site. The current site received a fairly good overall grade of 8.6 (grading scale 4–10).

A good piece of news to administrators was that the site is visited actively. We also received good, feasible suggestions for developing the contents and applicability of the site.

BOFIT web site user survey is a continuation of a reader survey of BOFIT publications conducted in 2001. The results of the reader survey were elaborated on in BOFIT Online No. 13/2001.

Due to differing questions and implementation method, it is difficult to compare the results of the two surveys. However, there are some common features. Readers considered BOFIT publications useful and important for their work, the readership of BOFIT publications has remained fairly unchanged over the period and the publications are being used as regularly as before.

Questionnaire for BOFIT's Web Service Users

1) How often do you visit the BOFIT's web pages?

Once a week or more frequently; 1-3 times a month; Less than once a month; This is my first visit

2) What is your user-role when visiting the BOFIT's web site?

Private citizen; Authority employee/representative; Company or organisation employee; Media representative; Researcher; Student or school pupil; Some other role, what?

3) Why are you visiting BOFIT's web site this time?

I am looking for information on the BOFIT and its functions; I came to read some of BOFIT's publications; I am looking for information on BOFIT's seminars; I am looking for information on currency exchange rates; I am looking for information on statistics; I am looking for contact information on specific persons/services; I am just browsing with no specific reason for visiting; I have other reasons for visiting the BOFIT's web site, what?

4) Do you read BOFIT's publications from our web site?

Yes; No

5) Do you download or read BOFIT's publications from our web site?

Yes; No; Sometimes

6) Which Bank of Finland publications do you read/download from our web site?

BOFIT Viikkokatsaus; BOFIT Weekly; BOFIT Russia Review; BOFIT China Review; BOFIT Online; BOFIT Discussion Papers

7) Did you find the pages you were looking for in our web site?

Yes, I always do; Yes, I usual do; I usual cannot; No, I can never find the page I'm looking for; I am not looking/ I don't usually look for anything in particular; I cannot say

8) What did you not succeed in finding?

9) How useful are the BOFIT's pages to you?

Extremely useful; Fairly useful; Not particularly useful; Not useful at all; I cannot say

10) Can you identify any essential information/details that you consider to be missing from the BOFIT's web site contents?

11) How would you grade your satisfaction with the BOFIT's web site, using the Finnish 4-10 grading scale, where 4=weak up to 10=excellent?

Appearance and layout of web site?; Technical application?; Accessibility?; Applicability and usefulness?; Overall satisfaction?

12) Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the BOFIT's Internet services?

13) What other comments or suggestions would you like to send to the persons editing and developing this web site?

14) Where do you work?

Research institution; University; Financial institution; Official agency; Media organisation; Elected post/party organisation; Labour organisation; Employer organisation; Firm; Other, please specify

15) Your profession/position?

Director/leading position; Senior manager/specialist; Middle manager; Employee; Private entrepreneur; Student/school pupil; Pensioner; Farmer; Housewife/househusband; Unemployed; Other, what?

16) Your place of residence?

Capital city region (Greater Helsinki); Other town in Finland, population over 50,000; Other town in Finland, population under 50,000; Other community in Finland; Other EU country (not Finland); Russia; Other Europe (not EU country); North America; China; Japan; Other, what country?

17) How often do you use the Internet?

Daily or almost daily; About 3-4 times a week; About 1-2 times a week; About 1-3 times a month; Seldom; I cannot say

- 2002
- No 1 Juhani Laurila: Determinants of transit transports between the European Union and Russia
 - No 2 Tarja Kauppi: Polish Economic Review 1/2002
 - No 3 Tuomas Komulainen: Elokuun 1998 talouskriisi
 - No 4 Laura Solanko - Merja Tekoniemi: Fiskaalifederalismi Venäjällä
 - No 5 Jian-Guang Shen: China's Macroeconomic Development in 2001
 - No 6 Tuuli Koivu: Vuosi 2001 Baltiassa
 - No 7 BOFIT: Näkökulmia Venäjän talouteen - BOFIT-seminaari 13.5.2002
 - No 8 Pekka Sutela: Combining the incompatibles: fixed exchange rate, liberalisation and financial development in Estonia
 - No 9 Tarja Kauppi: Polish Economic Review 2/2002
 - No 10 Iikka Korhonen: Selected Aspects of Monetary Integration
 - No 11 Tuuli Koivu: Banking and Finance in the Baltic Countries
 - No 12 Filippo Ippolito: The Banking Sector Rescue in Russia
 - No 13 Antje Hildebrandt: What is Special about Enlarging the European Union towards the East?
A Comparison with the Southern Enlargement
- 2003
- No 1 Marco Fantini: An evaluation of draft legislation on Russian deposit insurance
 - No 2 Jian-Guang Shen: China's Economic Development in 2002
 - No 3 Komulainen, Korhonen I, Korhonen V, Rautava, Sutela: Russia: Growth prospects and policy debates
 - No 4 Tuomas Komulainen: Polish Economic Review 1/2003
 - No 5 Abdur Chowdhury: Banking reform in Russia: Winds of change?
 - No 6 Laura Solanko: Why favor large incumbents? A note on lobbying in transition
 - No 7 Tuuli Koivu: Suotuisa kehitys jatkui Baltian maissa vuonna 2002
 - No 8 BOFIT: Näkökulmia Venäjän talouteen - BOFIT-seminaari 22.5.2003
 - No 9 Merja Tekoniemi: Venäjän maatalous 2000-luvulla - Venäjästäkö viljanviejä?
 - No 10 Abdur Chowdhury: WTO accession: What's in it for Russia?
 - No 11 Tuomas Komulainen: Polish Economic Review 2/2003
- 2004
- No 1 Elena Smirnova: Impact of Cross-listing on Local Stock Returns: Case of Russian ADRs
 - No 2 Seija Lainela - Pekka Sutela: European Union, Russia, and TACIS
 - No 3 Seija Lainela: Investoinnit kasvussa Venäjällä
 - No 4 BOFIT: Venäjän talous Putinin aikana
 - No 5 Merja Tekoniemi: Venäjän Kaukoidän taloudellinen integraatio
 - No 6 Tuuli Koivu: The sustainability of Chinese growth
 - No 7 Tapio Korhonen: Venäjän rahoitusjärjestelmän nykytila ja näkymät
 - No 8 Tapio Korhonen ja Simon-Erik Ollus: Mikä pääomapako Venäjältä?
 - No 9 Simon-Erik Ollus: How much oil can Russia produce? – A study in the Russian oil sector
 - No 10 Tapio Korhonen: Kiinan rahoitusjärjestelmän nykytila ja näkymät
 - No 11 Simon-Erik Ollus: Miksi kesällä 2004 oli luottamusputa? – Katsaus Venäjän pankkisektorin rakenteeseen ja nykytilaan
- 2005
- No 1 Tuuli Koivu: The challenge of choosing an optimal exchange rate regime for China
 - No 2 Jouko Rautava: Is India emerging as a global economic powerhouse equal to China?
 - No 3 Pekka Sutela: EU, Russia, and Common Economic Space
 - No 4 Barbara Bils: What determines regional inequality in China? – A survey of the literature and official data
 - No 5 Laura Solanko and Merja Tekoniemi: To recentralise or decentralise – some recent trends in Russian fiscal federalism
 - No 6 Pekka Sutela: Did Putin's reforms catapult Russia into durable growth?
 - No 7 Pekka Sutela: Finnish trade with the USSR: Why was it different?
 - No 8 Anna Mahlamäki, Laura Solanko, Merja Tekoniemi ja Simon-Erik Ollus: Venäjän keskeiset tuotannonalat 2000-luvulla – sektorikatsaus
 - No 9 Katrin Robeck: Russia's Gas Business – Facts, Challenges and the Road to Reform
 - No 10 Simon-Erik Ollus – Heli Pyykkö: Suomen ja Venäjän taloussuhteiden viimeaikainen kehitys
 - No 11 Tiina Saajasto: Siirtymätalouksien tutkimuslaitoksen Internet-sivujen käyttäjäkysely 2005
 - No 12 Anna Mahlamäki: Katsaus Venäjän pankkisektoriin
 - No 13 Tiina Saajasto: BOFIT web site user survey 2005