

PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COOPERATION/LEVEL OF INTEGRATION WITHIN THE
EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

LATVIA

RICHARD ALLDRITT
MICHELLE JOUVENAL
JAN MATEJCEK

DECEMBER 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	4
3. MAIN FINDINGS	5
3.1 Overall summary of the main findings	5
3.1.1 Findings in the strategy	5
3.1.2 Findings in the design	6
3.1.3 Findings in process chain management	6
3.1.4 Findings in process chain implementation	6
4. OTHER ISSUES	8
5. NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE VIEWS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM REVIEWERS' FINDINGS	9

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) of Latvia engages actively in cooperation activities within the European Statistical System (ESS) and its level of integration is considerable, especially with reference to the relatively small size of the country. The CSB participates actively in ESS projects, within the limits of its resources, and fruitful exchanges are organised also with other National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), and especially with Statistics Lithuania and Statistics Estonia on the basis of a long standing Baltic cooperation tradition.

The CSB makes determined efforts to take on board suggestions and recommendations issued at the European level. The Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) is the basis of the CSB's Quality Management System, and other standards for data exchange and transmission are largely adopted.

The importance of compliance with European requirements, the nature of ESS priorities, best practices and the importance of interaction and exchange with international colleagues are all widely and well understood among CSB staff.

2. INTRODUCTION

This present report is part of a series of assessments (peer reviews), the objective of which is to evaluate the extent to which National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and the European Statistical System (ESS)¹ comply with the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP).

The CoP sets 15 standards for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It builds upon a common ESS definition of quality in statistics and targets all relevant areas for the production and dissemination of European statistics (the institutional environment, the statistical production processes and the output). A set of indicators for each of the 15 principles operationalises and provides a reference for assessing the implementation of the Code.

In addition, the Peer Review team was also asked to include a stock take on how the national statistical system of Latvia acts as part of the ESS and to what extent it takes advantage of belonging to the system, with the aim of evaluating its potential to further integrate the production of European statistics. The assessment is based on responses to a self-assessment questionnaire and to questions addressed during the peer review visit.

The peer review of Latvia was implemented by a team composed by Mr Richard Alldritt (chair), Ms Michelle Jouvenal and Mr Jan Matejcek, who conducted a peer review visit to Riga from 29 September to 3 October 2014.

This report focuses on cooperation and the level of integration achieved by the Latvian statistical system, as well as its contribution to an integrated and collaborative ESS, as it was assessed during the visit.

¹ The ESS is the partnership between the Union statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and the Other National Authorities (ONAs) responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. This Partnership also includes the European Economic Area (EEA) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) engages actively in benchmarking/benchlearning activities, with a particular emphasis on cooperation meetings with Statistics Lithuania and Statistics Estonia based on a yearly common Baltic cooperation plan, which draws experts together to discuss specific topics of interest.

Fruitful exchanges are also organised with other National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), especially those experienced in areas where CSB plans to intervene to introduce improvements.

3.1.1 FINDINGS IN THE STRATEGY

The CSB takes part in different forms of cooperation, within the limits of its resources and aiming at enhancing the balanced participation to meetings of its personnel; attention is carefully paid to presence at Eurostat meetings, to those who may not benefit due to language constraints, to the topics discussed.

The historical cooperation with the Baltics has been conducive to fruitful exchange in methodological projects, the use of administrative data and internet household surveys and for the development of the time reporting system and other topics of common interest. Study visits which led to common projects have also been developed with other NSIs, for example Statistics Netherlands.

For a small institute as CSB, the participation in European Statistical System Network (ESSnet) projects is both outstanding and demanding, but as a result new definitions have been adopted and innovations have been introduced in some relevant areas, for example in business statistics.

The 2013 program "*Production of statistical information for the new EU initiatives*" reports participation in 46 grant projects, of which 18 were new projects and 17 came to an end. To date, the CSB participates in 5 ESSnet projects.

The CSB decides whether personnel should participate in international activities, and in particular in ESSnet, on the basis of the availability of resources - in particular suitably experienced staff - having the appropriate knowledge and according to the subject matter; participation is encouraged if justified. Although there is no separate budget line for these activities, CSB's flexible planning system allows for adjustments in case of participation in unplanned projects. CSB also promotes the participation of its staff to international meetings and especially Eurostat's working groups and task forces. The list of designated experts at CSB is a section of a longer official list of representatives of Latvia to the European Commission maintained by the Ministry of Economics.

Meetings are prepared and followed up through a specific procedure whereby mission reports have to contain recommendations for further actions. Summary of mission reports are submitted to the President of CSB on a monthly basis and recommendations for further actions are mostly incorporated within the CSB annual work plan and may lead to the establishment of special internal or inter-institutional working groups. Within three months of the participation to training activities abroad, participants have to present the topic to CSB interested employees.

The CSB does not have a regular programme of exchange of its staff with other NSIs or Commission services, although it recognizes that much can be learned and internalised as a consequence of exchange with experts from other institutions and that some improvements, if applied, could decrease workload or enhance efficiency.

3.1.2 FINDINGS IN THE DESIGN

Inputs deriving from exposure to European initiatives and developments are weighed carefully, and ESS priorities discussed and adopted at Directors' meetings and other working groups and task forces. They are then incorporated within the CSB mid-term strategy and taken into account in the preparation of the National Programme of Statistical Information (NPSI). The adoption of measures to implement EU new policy initiatives, as well as experience gained in grants and other international projects, are considered a priority for action.

In relation to data transmission on national accounts pursuant to Regulation 1392/2007, Latvia has a few derogations, whereby some tables will not be transmitted and some have been granted extended deadlines. In relation to data transmission on European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 2010 pursuant to Regulation 549/2013, Latvia has been granted (following a decision in June 2014) a few derogations concerning specific data sets, with extended deadlines foreseen for 2020.

The need for the production of new statistics, and related decisions, are evaluated by the project manager, taking into account the available information from other projects, the experience of other countries as well as other considerations, according to the procedure defined by the CSB Quality Management System (QMS). This ad hoc QMS was adopted in 2013 and the first thorough audit of the QMS was completed only very recently. The QMS reports, regulates and monitors all statistical processes on the basis of which the NPSI is prepared.

The Collaboration on Research and Methodology in Official Statistics (CROS) portal is used as a useful window on international best practice.

3.1.3 FINDINGS IN PROCESS CHAIN MANAGEMENT

As described in the CSB's QMS, the statistical production process is based on the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), version 4.0.

The CSB has developed and adopted (as of 2002) an Integrated Statistical Data Management System, which is a metadata driven environment for business statistics. A social statistics data warehouse is also under development, to centrally store and analyse data of administrative source.

The CSB values standardisation as an ongoing process and engages to incorporate all the information available in the Integrated Statistical Data Management System. The system is used internally for statistical data collection, validation, analysis and processing and externally with a subsystem for electronic survey collection, both for social and business statistics. Most information is available also in English on the CSB website.

3.1.4 FINDINGS IN PROCESS CHAIN IMPLEMENTATION

Concerning the chain of collection, processing, analysis, dissemination and storage of data, the situation reported by CSB was confirmed in the findings of the peer review visit.

Data from the EuroGroups Register (EGR) are used as a source to improve the quality of the Statistical Business Register (SBR) data on enterprise groups and for assessing data quality in Foreign Affiliates Statistics (FATS).

The CSB policy concerning data sharing is based on the principles set out in Regulation 223/2009 on European Statistics, and specific contracts are signed for data exchange. In particular, specific

contracts were signed with Statistics Estonia and Statistics Lithuania on exchange of micro data on external trade and with the Finnish Customs on the exchange of external trade micro data.

Concerning data and metadata exchange, Eurostat requirements are considered an obligation and therefore not under discussion: nevertheless, while recognising the advantages of standardisation, CSB would welcome the use of one standard tool, and not the need to comply with many and changing different ones.

The Single Entry Point (Edamis) is used for all statistics transmission as required by Eurostat; the Statistical Data and Metadata exchange Reference Infrastructure (SDMX-RI) is used for census data and metadata transmission; SDMX ML is used for national accounts data transmission as of 01.09.2014; other SDMX standards and the ESS Metadata Handler (NRME) are largely used for several statistical domains.

The CSB website provides a link to Eurostat's website and its main tables and to the website of Other National Authorities. Most of the website is available also in English; metadata cover all statistical domains.

4. OTHER ISSUES

Despite the active participation of the CSB in international activities and projects, it was reported that the existing threshold for participation in ESS projects is at times too high for a small country like Latvia, thus depriving experts of the possibility to participate more in projects of interest to it. A greater coordination with other DGs of the EU on demands for new statistics was also advocated.

Clearly, the CSB makes outstanding efforts to take on board suggestions and changes discussed and/or adopted at the European level, and it endeavours to find solutions for the participation of its staff to ESS meetings. Compliance with European requirements, full awareness of ESS driving ideas and priorities and importance of interaction and exchange with international colleagues and practices is widespread.

5. NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE VIEWS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM REVIEWERS' FINDINGS

CSB of Latvia does not have any diverging view on the report.