

Σ SIGMA

THE BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN STATISTICS

Building bridges

Focus on international statistical cooperation



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION



Editorial



For many years now, Eurostat and the national statistical institutes have been very active in the field of international statistical cooperation. The role of statistics has become increasingly important in the context of the most recent enlargements of the European Union, the extension of the European neighbourhood policy and continued EU support to developing countries.

Statistical cooperation helps develop and strengthen statistical capacity building in the partner countries and regions on the one hand, which in turn serves to improve governance and policymaking. On the other hand, statistical cooperation promotes the harmonisation of nomenclature and methodologies with international standards. Both aspects are essential in order to produce better-quality data and harmonised comparable indicators, needed to measure progress.

This current issue of *Sigma* presents examples of the many facets of statistical cooperation, in terms of diversity of players and cooperation activities.

Highlights include the role of Commission services in the design and implementation of EU cooperation strategies and programmes. The issue also describes the experiences and views of international organisations such as the World Bank and the UN. It presents too the point of view of some regional and national partners and examples of bilateral cooperation from members of the European statistical system in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Finally, we continue the series of presentations of the NSIs. In this issue you will also meet the Director-General of the Statistical Service of Cyprus.

Hervé Carré

Director-General, Eurostat

Editorial



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SIGMA

THE BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN STATISTICS

produced by Eurostat

Editor in chief: Philippe Bautier

Editorial team: Beatriz Fernández

Nebreda, Raquel Luz, Annika Östergren

Pofantis

Published by: Office for Official

Publications of the European

Communities, Luxembourg, 2007

ISSN 1018-5739

© European Communities, 2007

Graphic design by Fitolito 38, Italy

© Cover photos: EC Delegation Peru,

EC/ECHO/François Goemans, EC/ECHO

K. Johansson, EC/ECHO/Robert Watkins.

Jean-Jacques Patricola

Printed in Belgium

Printed on white chlorine-free paper

Sigma is available free of charge from:

Eurostat, Communication Unit,

Bech A4/112, L-2920 Luxembourg.

Fax: (352) 4301 35349.

E-mail: eurostat-pressoffice@ec.europa.eu

All issues of *Sigma* can be consulted

online at Eurostat's website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of *Sigma*:

Tim Allen, Ronnie Andersson, Christine

Ardillac, Shaïda Badiëe, Tatiana

Barsanescu, Eric Benseï, Julia Bunting,

Syndie Cervellin, Louise Corselli-

Nordblad, François Coûté, Ana Maria

Edwin, Ben Fekih, Laurent Freysson,

Gabriel Gamez, Martina Hahn, Jürgen

Heimann, Michelle Jouvenal, Claudia

Junker, Robert Knezevic, Mikhail A.

Korolev, Sophie Limpach, Antonio M.

Salcedo Galiano, Themba Munalula,

Daiva Norkevičienė, Francesca Perucci,

Muriel Petersilie, Daniel Rase, Ringo

Raupach, Henning Reimann, Irina

Schoen, Gazi Shbaikat, Silke Stapel,

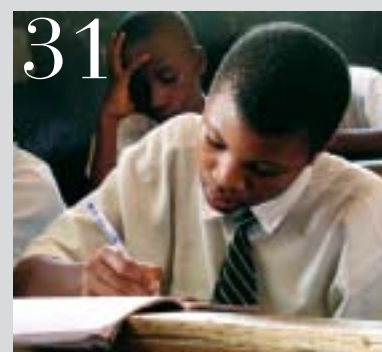
Daniela Stefanescu, Pierre Verdier,

Gerhard Waechter, Bernd Wild,

Hans Wilhem.

The views expressed in *Sigma* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission or the organisations to which the authors belong.

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Hervé Carré wants to give new momentum to the European statistical system

Eurostat Director-General, Hervé Carré, says that reducing the response burden doesn't mean giving up the quest for high-quality statistics.
Photo: Christine Ardillac

Eurostat Director-General Hervé Carré wants to give new momentum to the unique partnership in the European statistical system (ESS). In his first 10 months as the head of the EU Statistical Office, he and Deputy Director-General Marie Bohatá have visited 16 national statistical institutes to discuss issues of common interest and concern. Governance issues like the code of practice and its implementation, priority setting, the next five-year programme, the new European Advisory Committee on Community Statistical Information Policy and the creation of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Body were some of the topics on the agenda.



‘Shortly after my arrival in Eurostat, I became aware of a certain lack of dialogue between the partners of the ESS and a need to establish a closer relationship. This is the reason for our visits to the national statistical institutes’, says Mr Carré.

‘Currently we are renewing the basis for the European statistical system. We are discussing the “statistical law” and how to improve governance and the operational efficiency of the ESS in the Statistical Programme Committee. We are building something better and this is the kind of work I enjoy a lot!’, says Mr Carré with enthusiasm.

The new European Statistical Governance Advisory Body and the new CEIES, the European Advisory Committee on Community Statistical Information Policy will be key to success. The Advisory Body will play an important role in the implementation of the code of practice and the further boosting of the quality of statistics in the ESS. It will have five members selected from among experts possessing outstanding competence in the field of statistics. Eurostat will take part as an observer. The Advisory Body complements the European governance structure and enhances the independence, integrity and accountability of the ESS over and above already-existing structures. It will produce an annual report

on the implementation of the code of practice and it will be involved in the process leading to a quality label for European official statistics.

'It is still early days, but later on we will discuss with the national statistical institutes how to define a label. The idea is to have a sort of *appellation d'origine contrôlée* for official European statistics. Today, many institutions produce data on European or national level, but do they produce high-quality statistics? Should their data also be called official statistics? The Advisory Body will be central in the discussions with the ESS on this issue, as its sister organisations in Member States are on a national level', says Mr Carré.

Majority of users

Hand-in-hand with the Advisory Body comes the new Advisory Committee, which will see a drastically reduced number of members — from 79 to 25. Members will come from civil society, such as representatives of universities and scientific institutions, and institutional users of statistics, for example the European Parliament and the Council. Mr Carré does not fear that the reduced number of members will make user representation suffer.

'The goal was to make the Committee a smaller, more efficient body that can serve a more strategic role with regard to the development of European statistical information policies. In fact the majority of members will now actually be real users, compared to a majority of national producers in the previous body', he says.

The Committee will play a more important role in ensuring that user requirements and the burden on information providers and producers are taken into account. It will also coordinate the strategic objectives and priorities of the Community statistical information policy.

Making things simpler

Linked to the burden for respondents is the 'Communication on the reduction of response burden, simplification and priority-setting in the field of Community statistics' adopted by the European Commission in November 2006. The communication reflects issues that have been high on the agenda of Eurostat, Member States and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council for several years. And although most agree that the burden of statistics is only perceived, Mr Carré thinks it is important to deal with.

'Although statistical reporting is only a small part of the administrative burden on businesses, we should of course support the endeavour to minimise the response burden in every way that we can', he says.

'We should systematically analyse how we can simplify data collection and ask ourselves questions. Do we need to have the data every month, or is quarterly data enough? Can we collect some data every three years instead of every second year? The proposal to introduce a single flow reporting sys-

tem for trade data in Intrastat is another example of how to cut the response burden. In fact to divide it by two', he says.

The European approach

Mr Carré underlines that looking at reducing the response burden doesn't mean giving up the quest for high-quality statistics. It is possible to have both and gives as one example the flash estimate of the harmonised indices of consumer prices (HICP). It is released by Eurostat the last working day of the current month and to produce the euro-area aggregate, Eurostat only uses data from a few Member States.

'This is an excellent example of the 'European approach'. We manage to release high-quality HICP estimates very quickly, which is what is requested by European policymakers, the European Central Bank, the markets etc. The flash HICP is highly appreciated and widely used, thanks to its reliability and timeliness', Mr Carré says.

He believes Eurostat will release more data this way in the future and also mentions other possibilities of organising work within the ESS.

'In the far future we might also see more specialisation among the NSIs. Price statistics could perhaps be produced by one NSI and labour data by another. I think we can draw some lessons from the German federal system', he says.

Priorities

Priority-setting is also high on Mr Carré's agenda and has been a main thread through the discussions with the Member States. The next five-year programme, 2008–12, covers all European policy areas and there are priorities for each field. New actions will be discussed with the Member States and subjected to cost benefit analyses.

'It is of course difficult to foresee the needs of European policy in five years. Look at crime statistics for example, they were not on the agenda five years ago. Political developments drive the development of statistics', he says.

Mr Carré believes that Eurostat and the ESS have to become better at anticipating new areas of statistics and in general be more proactive.

'I heard a discussion on globalisation in the Economic and Financial Affairs Council recently and I realised that we should think about how we could provide a toolbox that shows policymakers the effects of globalisation on Europe. We shouldn't wait for them to ask for the data. We should start preparing now! However, I'm not advocating new statistics, I think there are plenty of data available that could be used for this purpose', he says.

Promoting statistics to enhance regional integration

'If a country does not have reliable statistics, you cannot have reliable politics', says Pieter Everaers, Eurostat Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics and Statistical Cooperation. Here he is together with Heads of Unit Arunas Butkevicius (left) and James Whitworth (right). Photo: Christine Ardillac

For many years, Eurostat has been active in the field of statistical cooperation with non-EU countries, with the aim of strengthening their statistical capacities and obtaining statistics from them. This work has become even more important with the increasing awareness of the role of statistics, especially in the context of the most recent enlargement of the Union and the European neighbourhood policy. *Sigma* met Pieter Everaers, Director of Eurostat Directorate E 'Agricultural and environment statistics; Statistical cooperation' and Arunas Butkevicius and James Whitworth, the heads of the main units in Eurostat responsible for international cooperation and for coordinating and delivering technical support to non-EU countries and regions.



The overall objective of international statistical cooperation is both to assist beneficiary countries and regions in developing their statistical systems, and to provide harmonised and reliable data for these countries to Commission services and Member States. Of course, we need to distinguish between the role and scope of our Unit E4 "Statistical cooperation with European and Mediterranean countries", and Unit E5 "International statistical cooperation", says Pieter Everaers.

Geographically, Unit E4 'Statistical cooperation with European and Mediterranean countries' covers the countries which need to comply with the statistical *acquis* of the EU (as is the case for the acceding, candidate and western Balkan countries) and those that aim to develop their statistical systems using the *acquis* as a target framework (the European neighbourhood policy countries). Compliance with

the *acquis* is a prerequisite for membership of the European Union, and the assessment of the compliance level for the statistical *acquis* come from Eurostat. Concretely, there is a direct involvement of Eurostat, from Unit E4 and technical units, in statistical assistance programmes. The focus is on steering and supporting beneficiary countries in their efforts to build up a sustainable statistical system and to deliver harmonised statistical data.

On the other hand, Unit E5 'International statistical cooperation' covers relations with the rest of the world and international organisations. It is a service-oriented unit providing support upon request primarily to Commission services and to Eurostat units in their relations with international organisations. The focus is more on advocacy, coordination, advice, training and capacity building and less on coaching or consultancy to individual countries.



Eurostat's Unit E4 'Statistical cooperation with European and Mediterranean countries' covers the countries which need to comply with the statistical *acquis* of the EU and those that aim to develop their statistical systems using the *acquis* as a target framework.

Photo: Christine Ardillac

'Both units have a role as facilitators between internal Commission services and external players, whether countries or regional organisations', explains Mr Everaers. 'The difference is that, in the case of Unit E4, we have to be more proactive. The approach of Unit E5 is more reactive, as we are not taking the initiative.'

A clear Commission mandate

'Unit E4 is expected to make sure that harmonised comparable data are available for the services of the European Commission for example the Directorates-General (DGs) for Enlargement and External Relations and to the public at large. We have a clear Commission mandate linked to a policy', explains Arunas Butkevicius, Head of Unit E4.

The regions covered by Unit E4 are the 12 new Member States (only for the handling of the statistical assistance programmes), the candidate countries (Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the western Balkan countries (Albania, Serbia including Kosovo under UNSCR 1244, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) countries which include six Tacis (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia

and Azerbaijan) and 10 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian Authority).

'For all these countries, we have to design, implement and evaluate huge technical assistance programmes and monitor the development of their statistical systems towards compliance with European and international standards. We work mainly on big EU programmes, under the leadership of DG Enlargement (for acceding and candidate countries) and the EuropeAid Cooperation Office, (for western Balkans and ENP countries). The most efficient way for us to implement the *acquis* is to use funding from these DGs' adds Mr Butkevicius. 'This particular instrument started in 1997, and the total accumulative amount is already approaching 100 million euro.'

Global advocates for statistics

'The role of our unit' continues James Whitworth, Head of Unit E5, 'is mainly advisory. We are advocates for statistics. We provide advice and assistance to the directorates-general in Brussels (DG Development, DG External Relations and EuropeAid), to the delegations around the world, the

beneficiaries and partners. Although the “rest of the world” countries have no obligation to comply with the *acquis*, in many cases they do want to have comparable data with that of the EU.’

The Commission’s cooperation policy is defined by DGs Development and External Relations. ‘It is at an early stage that we try to highlight the statistical component of the programmes’, says Mr Whitworth. ‘The funding is provided by EuropeAid, and the programmes are managed by the delegations. The launch of a statistical policy is increasingly recipient-driven. The beneficiaries have a great say in the definition of a project. Our expertise concerns the identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical projects or the statistical elements of more wide-ranging development projects. We are also producing a set of guidelines for delegations to help them to manage statistical programmes.’

‘An important aspect of our cooperation is that the existing programmes have a regional scope, such as CAN and in Latin

America, SADC, Comesa, Ecowas, WAEMU, Cemas, Palop, Caricom in ACP countries, or Asean in Asia. We only deal with individual countries occasionally. We offer our statistical expertise only upon request and when we do so, we are in a way promoting regional integration. That is where our value added lies. A typical regional programme will run for around five years at a cost of 2 to 5 million euro.’

A need for improved coordination

When asked about weaknesses of European statistical cooperation, Mr Whitworth replies: ‘In general, one of the biggest problems in technical cooperation is the lack of coordination amongst donors. It is difficult for each of us to know what the other is doing. There are a lot of donor countries and international organisations with whom we are in contact: all UN regional commissions, the World Bank and all the regional development banks and domain-specific organisations such as UNFP, FAO, WHO, Unesco. We have recently convened an



Eurostat’s Unit E5 ‘International statistical cooperation’ covers relations with the world outside of Europe and the Mediterranean countries and international organisations. It is a service-oriented unit providing support upon request primarily to Commission services and to Eurostat units in their relations with international organisations. Photo: Christine Ardillac

Advisory Group on the coordination of EU technical cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa which we hope will go some way to solving the problem, but of course this initiative must fit into global initiatives, such as the Paris21 consortium.'

'In this area, the message is to keep the momentum we have been building up for the last decade. At first, international organisations did not talk to each other and now they do. More remains to be done but there has been progress.'

Butkevicius adds: 'This need for better communication and coordination also exists within the Commission services and the EU. For example, given the number of regional programmes, such as Phare, Cards and Medstat, we need to avoid duplicating effort and funding. The annual forums regularly organised by us, such as the Management Group on Statistical Cooperation meetings, aim to resolve these issues.'

The advantage for Unit E4 is that the results of cooperation activities can be assessed in terms of data becoming available. 'However for Unit E5,' explains Mr Whitworth, 'it is difficult to perceive the statistical results and the impact of the cooperation. The goal in our case is to increase the statistical capacity of developing countries in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of development policies and to monitor poverty assessment strategies and benchmark the millennium development goals. And here the results are normally not immediately visible.'

A source of technical expertise and regional integration

Regarding the strengths of European statistical cooperation, Mr Everaers says: 'Cooperation is a question of both expertise and funding. The first point is that EU countries and the European Commission are the main donors and the second point is that we have, in Eurostat and in the national statistical institutes of the Member States, a wide variety of technical expertise.'

For Mr Butkevicius, the assets of Unit E4 are 'the Commission mandate, the fact that financial resources are clearly defined and that the cooperation results can be measured. The fact that we have in our database thousands of data series from the new Member States comparable with those of the old Member States is a proof of the success of European cooperation.'

'In addition, Eurostat has a lot to offer as regards regional integration,' says Mr Whitworth. 'We have had some good success stories, such as the WAEMU project in West Africa on harmonised price statistics which attained the set

objectives and the political needs. We have some very good practices and we are going to ask the Advisory Group to build on them.'

Main challenges for the future

The establishment of common standards, as referred to by Mr Butkevicius, 'is of particular interest to the EU. The main challenge, however,' he continues, 'is to help to establish a proper place for statistics in the relevant political processes, especially in the ENP countries, where they already have relatively well-developed statistical systems. In general, we should promote a service-oriented culture adjusting the existing cooperation instruments to the changing political situation in these countries, over which we have no control. Let me quote, for example, the need for a census in Kosovo and the impact of Montenegro's independence.'

'There is also the issue of a country's absorption capacity, as it is difficult to change or to build from scratch the entire statistical system in a short period,' says Mr Butkevicius. 'Moreover, there is an additional challenge in some cases: a change of culture and mentality is needed, as was the case in the eastern European countries. Eurostat's role is a main factor in ensuring that these issues are addressed in a cooperative way.'

Involving the decision-makers in developing countries

'Advocacy is a major issue for us. We need to get the decision-makers in developing countries to take ownership of the projects,' explains Mr Whitworth. 'On the one hand, we have statisticians who do not need to be convinced as to the importance of statistics, on the other, decision-makers from both the donors and the developing countries. Those on the donor side are beginning to give a higher profile to statistics in their development plans because of the need for concrete results to justify to the taxpayer increasing amounts of development aid. One area where more work needs to be done is amongst decision-makers in developing countries, as statistics have to compete for resources with other development projects.'

'Statistical cooperation may be regarded as a tool that helps enable a more effective distribution of wealth, which in turn promotes greater national stability,' as Mr Everaers remarks. 'If a country does not have reliable statistics, you cannot have reliable politics. And this is clearly a fundamental underlying part of the Community policy,' he ends.

By Beatriz Fernández Nebreda, Communication Unit, Eurostat.

‘Statistics are instrumental in the EU’s cooperation policies’



Today the European Union — the European Commission and the Member States — accounts for 55 % of the world’s overseas assistance, making it the world’s largest donor. The European Commission manages one fifth of this amount, which in 2006 was more than EUR 6 billion. A recent study has confirmed that statistics are instrumental in the context of the Commission’s development and cooperation policies with third countries, although there is no real strategy for the Commission’s support to statistics.

The European Commission’s cooperation policy is defined by the Directorates-General (DGs) for External Relations and Development and implemented by the EuropeAid Cooperation Office.

DG External Relations represents the EU in third countries, fostering cooperation and promoting dialogue with partners. It includes the European neighbourhood policy, aimed at building a particularly strong partnership between the enlarged EU and EU neighbours to the east and on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Its cooperation projects are financed by the common EU budget.

DG Development’s mandate is to enhance development policies in all developing countries worldwide and to oversee the programming of aid in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. DG Development’s actions are financed by the European Development Fund, which is not part of the EU budget, but funded by Member States separately.

The EuropeAid Cooperation Office was set up in 2001 as the single Commission DG to ensure that the EU’s financial and technical support throughout the world is deployed wisely and effectively. Its mission is to implement the external aid instruments of the Commission funded by the EU budget and the European Development Fund. EuropeAid is responsible for all phases of the project cycle — from the identification of programmes and projects to their implementation, monitoring and evaluation, which ensures the achievement of the objectives of the programmes established by the Directorates-General for External Relations and Development and approved by the Commission.

In a wider context, EuropeAid manages funds as part of the Commission’s external assistance. EuropeAid is also involved in initiatives to improve programming systems and their content, to establish policy evaluation programmes and to develop mechanisms for feeding back evaluation results. To this end, statistical indicators are instrumental in helping to monitor progress.

Sigma met Eric Deschoenmaecker from DG Development and Tom Leemans and Antonia Parera Nicolau from EuropeAid, to get a closer view of the role statistics play in the Commission’s external cooperation policy.

Country and regional programmes

Statistics is not a separate policy area in the European Union’s cooperation policy, as are environment, infrastructure or agriculture etc. They do, however, play an increasingly important role and are used to measure the effects of projects and changes in different policy areas.

Each country and region has its own specific programme and strategy. The financial envelopes are programmed for six years at a time. The next period is 2007–13. For every country a maximum of two focal sectors are identified. The main sectors are infrastructure, environment, agriculture, society, education and health. The programmes are demand-driven and are defined out of the needs of the recipient country or region, based on their own national strategies and in coordination with other donors.

‘At this stage, the countries may or may not pay attention to statistics. Demands are so far mostly ad hoc or for a special need, for example for a population census. Everyone is aware that statistics are important of course for sound policymaking and follow-up, but it is a horizontal issue important across all sectors and not threaded in the same way as environment, health or transport’, says Mr Deschoenmaecker, who works in the unit in charge of Budget Support and Economic Governance in DG Development.

‘We try to advocate for statistics and explain that although it is imperative to feed people, a food crisis is easier to manage if you know where the grain is and at what price it is sold in different regions of the country’, says Mr Leemans from the unit responsible for business, trade and regional integration in EuropeAid.

Towards budget support

The Commission's current trend is moving towards a holistic approach to funding, rather than investing in individual projects — so called 'budget support'.

'Budget support means that we give money directly to a country's treasury to provide the country with financial resources to support its own poverty reduction policy. There are of course a number of conditions to be fulfilled for a country to be eligible for such an instrument. There must be prospects for macroeconomic stability, for sound public finances management and a strategy should also be in place to deal with poverty reduction', says Ms Parera Nicolau, working in the EuropeAid unit responsible for macroeconomic quality support to geographical units and delegations.

'Before, we used to mainly fund projects such as building schools, redrafting the curriculum, improving school books etc. Now we try to support sectors or national policies, by having extensive policy dialogue and using national budget procedures, to increase ownership and sustainability. We therefore increasingly give money directly to the State budget and therefore increase national resources to implement agreed reforms, investments and policies. Together with the government, we define clear objectives that can be objectively measured, for example increased enrolments of children — both boys and girls — in primary schools, attendance in health centres or the level of financial resources allocated for a particular sector. We try as far as possible to focus on output indicators that indicate improvement in the quality of public services delivered to the population, and that are good proxies of poverty', says Mr Leemans.

'Budget support means that there is a greater need for indicators, and therefore for quality statistics, to measure if a policy action is successful, and to what extent. In order to ensure that the set objectives have been achieved, it is of utmost importance to have a reliable underlying statistical system in place', he continues.

Statistics that count

EuropeAid has recently carried out an evaluation of the Commission's support for statistics in third countries over the period 1996–2005. It confirmed that there was no real strategy for the Commission's support to statistics and that statistics have been instrumental rather than a policy dimension in the context of the Commission's development and economic cooperation with third countries.

Over the nine-year period, some 160 statistical projects and programmes were identified for a total expenditure amount of EUR 335 million. In addition, specific statistical interventions such as the analysis of survey data or specific training actions have been financed in the context of other projects (e.g. budget support programmes).

Overview of the Commission's statistical intervention in third countries, 1996–2005

Region of intervention	Number of projects	Commitments (million EUR)
ACP	63	229
<i>of which census in Nigeria</i>		116
MEDA	46	52
Tacis	40	27
Asia & Latin America	9	27
Total	158	335

ACP: African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.

MEDA: Mediterranean members of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

Tacis: Beneficiary countries of the technical assistance programme for the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The main conclusion of the report is that statistical programmes and projects have been useful and that nearly all projects have yielded positive results. There is, for example, better coverage, reduction in delays and better dissemination of statistics. There have also been improvements in the assimilation and adoption of international recommendations and methodologies for statistics. These improvements are the result of the strengthening of the human resources — the number of statisticians involved in the projects — and the transfer of professional know-how to national and regional institutions and persons.

The technical quality of interventions is also considered as having been good. The main improvements are observed in a few core statistical areas, also strongly supported by other donors, such as national accounts, consumer price indexes and government accounts. In other areas, such as in migration, social indicators and trade statistics for example, the quality and comparability of data remain a major issue. However, improvements of the data used for decision-making and policy formulation or monitoring of development policies remains modest.

The sustainability of the interventions in their three dimensions — human, financial and technical resources, depends on their nature. It is not usually a main preoccupation for one-off statistical projects which are expected to produce specific results, e.g. a statistical publication. By contrast, larger-scale regional statistical programmes typically take several years to reach cruising speed as they involve national and regional actors with variable levels of statistical harmonisation. In those circumstances achieving sustainability can indeed take several subsequent project interventions.

'In summary, cooperation on statistical projects and programmes has been a success, although there are obviously some weaknesses. The most important result is that the level of statistics is higher now than before, and that we are committed to achieving further progress', says Mr Leemans.

By Annika Östergren Pofantis, Communication Unit, Eurostat.

Metagora: successfully measuring governance and human rights

Comparing strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to measuring human rights, governance and democracy is one of the main objectives of Metagora. Mr Daniel Kaufmann of the World Bank Institute addressing the Metagora Forum in May 2005. Photo: Metagora

It is a general belief that democratic governance and human rights are areas too abstract to measure and quantify, leaving progress and change in this field to subjective opinions and analysis. Recent work by the Metagora project has, however, proven that these areas can also be subject to objective and quantifiable measurement via statistical tools.



Metagora is an international project under the OECD/Paris21 initiative focusing on methods, tools and frameworks for measuring democracy, human rights and governance to enhance evidence-based assessments in these fields. The project was initially carried out from February 2004 to February 2006 and prolonged, with a consolidation period from March to December 2006. Discussions are ongoing between donors and the project team on a possible second phase of the project, covering 2007–10. The European Community has supported the project with EUR 1 510 000 (67 % of the overall budget) through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights budget line.

Decentralised laboratory of innovation

The Metagora project team refers to itself as a decentralised laboratory for innovation; it is policy-oriented in scope, multidisciplinary in approach, inclusive and participatory in

method, bringing together statisticians, human rights activists and public authorities. The originality of Metagora is its bottom-up approach to the development of indicators and related measurement methods in the field of democratic governance and human rights. Metagora partners all work with tools and methods that are designed for a particular issue in a particular context; however, through this project, the capacity of these tools to produce policy-relevant results is being assessed, and has thus provided lessons that can be applied in other situations elsewhere in the world.

Metagora has, in close collaboration with its partners, collected and analysed information on how human rights and democratic governance can be measured using statistical tools. One component of the work has focused on methodology, through experience gathered from different regions; from Mexico City where three pilot surveys looked into abuse and ill-treatment by police forces, to a project on the rights of indigenous peoples in the Philippines and a South African project on the implementation of land reform. National of-



A pilot project in the Philippines seeks to bring the human rights situation of indigenous peoples before Philippine policymakers and development managers in order to enable them to realise their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Photo: Metagora

belief that people were reluctant to participate due to fear of reprisals. This is an important observation, since monitoring of this area is facilitated by a bottom-up approach where local and national stakeholders participate to identify the relevant issues for that particular geographical area.

NSIs and NGOs play an important role

ficial statistical agencies have also been among the partners of Metagora through two regional multi-country surveys on democracy and governance issues implemented by national statistical institutes (NSIs) in eight capitals of francophone Africa and in three countries of the Andean Community.

The project has also developed indicators and a database on the right to education in Palestine for example, and established a controlled vocabulary and harmonised procedures allowing local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to collect and analyse data on human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Metagora has also carried out a worldwide survey on projects measuring human rights and democratic governance and compiled the information collected in a database. Based on lessons learnt and collected experience from the various initiatives, Metagora has identified and produced training materials in the field of measuring human rights and democratic governance.

Measuring democracy and human rights

An Independent Panel of Experts (IPE) was appointed in 2005 to review the reports emanating from the project and, upon request from donors, the IPE also produced a substantial assessment report based on an in-depth technical and scientific review of the project's pilot phase.

Awaiting the final observations from the IPE, Metagora has already presented some preliminary lessons learnt.

Metagora has proven that the preconceived view on the difficulties of measuring democracy and human rights was in-founded, and that in fact reliable and relevant statistical information on human rights and democratic governance can successfully be collected. This work has been supported by another conclusion: that people are often interested and willing to participate in monitoring and evaluation of human rights and democratic governance, contrary to the general

One objective of Metagora was to test how official statistical agencies can be involved in monitoring of human rights and democratic governance and the various cases have shown that NSIs can, in fact, play an important role. It can, for instance, result in increased legitimacy of the results and also improve the efficiency of the monitoring, due to the professionalism and specific technical expertise in statistics that the NSI has. However, the potential question of bias and issues regarding ethics and protection of informants must be addressed and ensured.

Last but not least, Metagora has also come to the conclusion that human rights institutions and NGOs can contribute to systematic and quantitative monitoring of human rights and democratic governance, rather than just following individual cases, which does not provide relevant information and data on the magnitude and trends in human rights and democratic governance.

This article is based on documents from the Metagora project.



A pilot survey in South Africa focuses on the realisation of democracy and human rights in the context of South Africa's land reform process. Photo: Metagora

For further information:

www.metagora.org
<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid>

‘Investment in statistics contributes to successful enlargement’



Bernd Wild, Task-Manager, Directorate-General for Enlargement in the European Commission.

Enlargement is one of the EU's most powerful policy tools. The pull of the EU has helped to transform the countries of central and eastern Europe into modern, well-functioning democracies. More recently, it has inspired far-reaching reforms in Turkey, Croatia and the western Balkans. All European citizens benefit from having neighbours that are stable democracies and prosperous market economies. Enlargement is a carefully managed process which helps the transformation of the countries involved, extending peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe.

The European Union has undergone a number of enlargements since its creation. More and more countries have joined the first six Member States.

The EU now has 27 Member States following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007. But the process is not finished. Regardless of the debate on the constitutional reform of the EU, the idea is that any European State which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law may apply to become a member of the Union.

The mission of Directorate-General (DG) Enlargement is to take forward the process of enlargement of the European Union under the guidance of the Commissioner for Enlarge-

ment. Currently DG Enlargement is carrying out a comprehensive screening of Croatia and Turkey in order to take stock of the countries' alignment to the *acquis communautaire*. It is also responsible for the association stabilisation and accession policy of the European Union. This aims at stabilising the western Balkan countries and promoting their association with the EU with a view to future accession. Last, but not least, DG Enlargement manages the Union's financial assistance to candidate and potential candidate countries and to new Member States during a transition period after accession. This assistance supports the reform process as well as preparations for eventual membership. It focuses on institution-building, alignment with the *acquis communautaire* and preparation for Community policies and instruments.

Statistics indispensable for the enlargement process

The importance of statistical data for these processes is paramount. In the screening and negotiation process, proper sound, reliable and comprehensive statistical data are indispensable for measuring the candidate countries' alignment to the *acquis communautaire*. Thanks to the tradition of statistical cooperation and to the early implementation of the *acquis* in the area, the provision of data for the required policy areas is usually possible.

As far as the monitoring reports for the candidate, potential candidate and acceding countries are concerned, the statistical annexes are an integral part of the report. Moreover the statistical data provide an important basis for the policy analysis of the other chapters.

It goes without saying that the quality of the data is essential. The accuracy and comparability of data is very important to come to the right conclusions. This is not only the case for membership, where for example government deficit and debt data are used for assessing if a country qualifies for membership in the euro zone. This is equally essential in the



'Experience shows that the biggest needs for statistical data arise from the areas of agriculture, social policy and demography, environment and economic and monetary policy', says Bernd Wild.
EPA Photo / Kermin Okten

pre-accession context in order to evaluate if, for instance, the macroeconomic reforms are sufficiently implemented and a country will be able to stand the competitive pressures of membership.

Experience shows that the biggest needs for statistical data arise from the areas of agriculture, social policy and demography, environment and economic and monetary policy. Relevant and recent data need to be available in a timely manner. DG Enlargement fully understands that it is difficult to provide recent and coherent data from countries which still have to build up a sound administrative capacity. However, sustainable activities in statistical cooperation should enable Eurostat to provide key data.

DG Enlargement believes the statistical cooperation programmes are beneficial since they help to build up capacities in our partner countries and help to satisfy the data demands. The successful integration of the 10 new countries in 2004 into the European Union would also not have been possible without the statistical data supporting all the areas of Commission policies. It is our firm belief that the investment in statistics also contributed to this successful integration.

Cooperation with Eurostat services is usually constructive and efficient, be it in the context of the supply of statistical data or in the context of screening or technical adaptations for the accession treaty. Ad-hoc demands for data may be satisfied through the various Eurostat databases available online, although the navigation may sometimes not be obvious.

Targeted assistance

As far as future support schemes for statistics are concerned the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) has replaced the three pre-accession instruments relevant for statistics, Phare, Cards and the Turkey instrument. IPA aims at providing

targeted assistance to countries which are candidate and potential candidate countries for membership in the EU.

IPA has also been designed to better adapt to the different objectives and progress of each beneficiary concerned, so as to provide a targeted and effective support according to their needs and evolution. In particular, IPA will help to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, reform public administration, carry out economic reforms, promote respect for human as well as minority rights and gender equality, support the development of civil society and advance regional cooperation, and contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction. For candidate countries, the additional objective is the adoption and implementation of the full requirements for membership, whereas only approximation to these requirements will be requested from potential candidate countries. The implementation of assistance under IPA is ensured through annual or multiannual programmes, as specified in the Commission regulation on implementation of the IPA. All programmes are designed following multiannual indicative planning documents, a three-year strategy document for each country, where the major areas of intervention and the main priorities are presented by the Commission.

In view of the above we can conclude that statistics will continue to benefit from the pre-accession schemes just as enlargement will be able to profit from the continuous support of statistics.

By Bernd Wild, Task-Manager, Romania Unit, Cross-sector responsibility for statistics in DG Enlargement, European Commission.



Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are candidate countries. © EC / A. Zrno



'The importance of statistical data for the enlargement processes is paramount. Sound, reliable and comprehensive statistical data are indispensable for measuring the candidate countries' alignment to the *acquis communautaire*', says Bernd Wild. © EPA Photo / Paul Buciuta

The EU and the Andean Community: integration through harmonisation

It is currently not possible to compare the official statistics between the member countries of the Andean Community (known as CAN, *Comunidad Andina*, a regional integration bloc comprising Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), due mainly to the different methodologies and data collection methods. Therefore, given the lack of data comparability, it is hard to develop common policies in key areas such as employment, foreign trade or foreign investment.

First Working Group meeting of Balance of Payments Statistics (Caracas, April 2006), with representatives of the Secretariat of the Andean Community, the Andestad project management team, the EC delegation in Venezuela, central banks and national statistics offices of the Andean Community member countries and European statistics experts.



In view of this problem, and as part of the regional integration assistance provided by European cooperation, the EU–CAN Project on Statistics — Andestad — is being implemented. It aims to use the European Union's experience to make the data collected from the different countries comparable. The project's objective is to improve the quality of the statistics that are used to effectively prepare, manage and evaluate government policies at national level.

In order to bolster integration between the CAN countries, the EU aims to strengthen regional stability and boost trade integration. In other words, European cooperation is focusing on harmonised statistics to improve regional integration between the Andean countries.

What is the EU's objective in supporting CAN integration?

We should first note that relations between the EU and the CAN began just when the process of Andean integration was starting. The first agreement was signed in 1983 and, in December 2003, as part of the cooperation in place between the two blocs, a political dialogue and cooperation agree-

ment was signed, strengthening the links between the two regions by extending the agreement's remit to cover peace and security, democracy and governance, trade, economic and social development, migration, the environment and security.

We should also bear in mind the following.

1. The European Union is the Andean Community's second largest trading partner.
2. In recent years, relations between the two blocs have intensified as a result of the new strategies, contexts and objectives that each side has brought to its political, economic and cooperation policies.
3. In particular, the two parties are currently involved in preliminary work for negotiations on an association agreement, which will represent a quantum leap in relations between the two regions.

Regional cooperation with the CAN is managed by the European Commission delegation in Peru, since the head-



Andestad covers five major fields: institutional support, foreign trade and transport statistics, national accounts and macroeconomic statistics, business and territorial statistics, and poverty statistics. The aim is to provide a quantitative basis for decision-making and the drafting of policies in a coordinated way between the Andean countries.
Photos: Pierre Cester



quarters of the CAN Secretariat General are located in the Peruvian capital Lima. The European Commission delegation in Peru (specifically the Economic and Regional Cooperation Section, which has been in place since 2005) is responsible for identifying and formulating cooperation projects and contractually implementing financing agreements.

The Andestad project

The Andestad project aims to contribute to the process of strengthening the regional institutions of the Andean Community by improving the quality of the statistics used to formulate national and Community policies. To this end, it is important to have common statistics, which make it possible to harmonise economic policies and strengthen the common Andean market.

At present, the project team is working with the bodies involved in the countries' national statistics programmes and with the Community Statistics Service run by the CAN Secretariat General. The project covers five major fields: institutional support, foreign trade and transport statistics, national accounts and macroeconomic statistics, business and territorial statistics, and poverty statistics. Accordingly, it will help provide a quantitative basis for decision-making and the drafting of policies to develop foreign trade and the social, macroeconomic and business sectors in a coordinated way between the Andean countries.

Following the European model

The support provided by both Eurostat and EU experts is vital for CAN statistical harmonisation, ensuring a continuous flow of communication between the project and the European organisation. According to Eduardo Granados, Regional Director of the Andestad project, 'We are using Andean experts to carry out our work and are modelling our strategy on that used by Eurostat to harmonise its Community statistics'.

The project's progress is shared with each national statistical institute twice a year at meetings of the project's Advisory Committee. On these occasions, the directors of the institutes meet representatives from Eurostat, the European Commission delegation in Peru and some European experts to guarantee the institutional coordination needed to implement the project, share experiences and work on statistical harmonisation.

Harmonisation of methodology

On the subject of methodology, Eduardo Granados says that 'With regard to harmonisation, we are starting on the basis that each national institute producing official statistics works in its own way to try to comply with international recom-



First Working Group meeting of Air Transport Statistics (Lima, January 2006). Participants: representatives of the Secretariat of the Andean Community, the Andestad project management team; representatives of the civil aviation authorities and airports of the Andean Community member countries; and European statistics experts.

recommendations. However, local decisions have sometimes led to methodological changes. For instance, for employment statistics, the national methodologies follow International Labour Organisation recommendations, but, operationally, each country takes a different age as the minimum working age. Consequently, data on unemployment are initially incomparable. The aim of the project, therefore, is to obtain harmonised statistics that allow us to make comparisons between the countries and to produce aggregate indicators for the Community as a whole, while respecting each country's autonomy to produce its statistical data. We are not trying to impose working practices, but rather standardise them on the basis of consensus!

In addition, Andestad is working with the national statistical institutes in key areas such as training and qualifications for officials and the dissemination of information in the respective countries and at Community level. Mr Granados is also pleased with the level of commitment shown by the member countries and their response to this joint EU-CAN effort.

Within a few years, with the support of common statistics, it will no longer be difficult for CAN countries to share strat-

egies on key issues, and this will enable them to work in a more unified way and make further progress on the long road towards Andean integration.

By Henning Reimann, Head of the Economic and Regional Cooperation Section, EC Delegation in Peru.

- The Andestad project was launched on 13 June 2005 and will last four years.
- The project also works with the Andean countries to improve their respective national statistics plans.
- The total funding of Andestad amounts to EUR 8 million. The European Union contributes EUR 5 million and the remaining EUR 3 million are provided by the Andean Community.
- In spite of the fact that the CAN is currently made up of four countries (after Venezuela withdrew from the Community in April 2006), Venezuela is still participating in the project.
- Although Andestad is the only regional project focusing on statistics, other EU-CAN cooperation projects have statistical elements.

For further information:

<http://secgen.comunidadandina.org/andestad>
www.delper.ec.europa.eu

Fifteen years of statistical cooperation in the Commonwealth of Independent States

International workshop for the heads of the national statistical institutes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). One important activity of the CIS Statcommittee is to collect and disseminate comparable social and economic indicators for the CIS countries.

Today the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. The Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS Statcommittee) was established in accordance with the decision of the heads of governments of the CIS in December 1991 for the coordination of activities of statistical services of the CIS countries, the development of a unified statistical methodology in compliance with international standards, securing the comparability of statistical data and rendering assistance to the CIS national statistical services.



One important activity of the CIS Statcommittee consists of the collection and dissemination of major social and economic statistical indicators of the CIS countries, which are comparable within the CIS region but also in a broader international context. This information is provided to the governments of the CIS countries, including their statistical offices, to the CIS bodies, such as the Council of the Heads of Governments of the CIS, the Economic Council, the Executive Committee of the CIS and others. It enables them to analyse the major results of socio-economic development, to assess the role of each country in the regional and world economy and to take decisions on the issues of economic cooperation among the CIS countries.

The dissemination of data is carried out by publishing a considerable number of publications. Thus, for the period 1992–2006, the CIS Statcommittee released 140 statistical yearbooks and compendiums, 380 statistical bulletins and about 1 200 reports, press-releases and analytical notes. The data are also disseminated in electronic form with the major series being provided on the website of the CIS Statcommittee. For the above period, more than 4 400 copies of compact discs were issued. At present, the statistical database of the Committee includes 7 000 tables which contain 900 indicators. The CIS Statcommittee exchanges statistical publications with international organisations and statistical services of many countries.



The transition of statistics of the CIS countries to international methodology and standards calls for systematic international cooperation of the CIS Statcommittee. Photo: Johan Selenius

A wide cooperation with international organisations

The transition of statistics of the CIS countries to international methodology and standards, meeting the requirements of a market economy, calls for systematic international cooperation by the CIS Statcommittee. International activities of the CIS Statcommittee are also necessary to render assistance to the CIS national statistical services in setting up their foreign relations with the leading international statistical organisations responsible for the development of statistical standards, as well as with statistical services of western countries with good experience in this work.

In the period 1992–2006, the CIS Statcommittee carried out cooperation with statistical bodies of the following international organisations: the UN Statistics Division, the UNECE Statistical Division, the Unescap Statistics Division, the ILO Labour Statistics Bureau, the UNFPA, the FAO Statistics Division, the Development Economics Department of the World Bank, Eurostat, the Statistics Directorate of the OECD, the Statistical Department of the IMF, the Consortium Paris21 and the Permanent Office of the ISI.

In the framework of this cooperation, the CIS Statcommittee participated jointly with international organisations in

the projects executed by them in different fields of statistics, in the development of international methodological standards and recommendations on their implementation in practical activities of statistical services. Among such projects are the preparation of a manual on non-observed economy, the development of national systems of statistical classifications, projects in the field of labour statistics, external trade and price statistics, environment and social statistics, recommendations for population and housing censuses. At present, the CIS Statcommittee plays jointly with Rosstat, the Russian federal statistical office, the coordinating role in the conduct of international comparisons of GDP and purchasing power parities of the CIS currencies for 2004–05 in the framework of a global round of the UN ICP (International Comparison Programme).

In order to expand international cooperation, the CIS Statcommittee signed a memorandum of understanding with the Statistics Directorate of OECD in February 2002. The purpose of this memorandum is the cooperation in programmes of international comparisons, the implementation of SNA-93, the improvement of methods of non-observed economy estimation, and the reconciliation and harmonisation of international classifications and nomenclatures.

A similar memorandum of understanding was signed in March 2003 with the Consortium Paris21. In the framework of this memorandum, cooperation is carried out in the improvement of methods of statistical data usage in the process of decision-making, improvement of methodological fundamentals of statistics, methods of collection, processing and dissemination of statistical information, and methods of statistical systems management.

In December 2003, the CIS Statcommittee and the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Bank on the management and conduct of an international comparison programme in the CIS region for 2003–06. Apart from that, the CIS Statcommittee signed an agreement with the US Census Bureau on mutual exchange of statistical publications.

A key methodological role

Methodological activities of the CIS Statcommittee, closely connected with international cooperation, made it possible to prepare more than 500 methodological documents, recommendations and instructions on the basis of about 200 documents of international statistical organisations, which contributed considerably to the transition of the CIS statistical services to international standards. For example, some of the prepared documents were intended to facilitate the introduction of SNA-93 into regular statistical practices of the CIS countries and the adaptation of the system to peculiarities in the organisation of economy and statistics in these countries. Based on the recommendations for population and housing censuses, the CIS Statcommittee started preparing the 2010 round of the censuses in the CIS countries. For this purpose the Coordinating Council for Population Censuses, which operates under the auspices of the CIS Statcommittee, was established.

Taking into account the fact that the main decisions on methodological materials being developed are taken at the meetings and conferences of statistical bodies of the United Nations and other international organisations, the participation of the CIS Statcommittee in these is very important. The CIS Statcommittee is an official observer in the UN Statistical Commission, the UNECE Conference of European Statisticians and its Bureau, and the Unescap Subcommittee on Statistics, and is the member of the Committee for the Co-ordination of Statistical Activities (previously – the UN ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities).

Apart from that, in the framework of cooperation in the field of statistics with the European Union, the OECD, the World Bank, the IMF, the ILO and the Paris21 Consortium, the specialists of the CIS Statcommittee participated in 130 meetings of the working groups, seminars and study courses conducted by these international organisations on the following questions: national accounts, labour statistics, external trade, prices, agriculture, environment and social statistics, information systems, population and housing censuses, international economic classifications, dissemination of statistical information, international comparisons of GDP and others.

700 consultations to the CIS statistical institutes

Of great importance is the consultative methodological assistance rendered by the CIS Statcommittee to the specialists of the CIS statistical services on the questions of statistical observation organisation, conduct of household surveys, the

development of national classification systems and their introduction into statistical practice. In the period 1992–2006, the CIS Statcommittee organised more than 700 consultations for the specialists of the CIS statistical services.

An important aspect of statistical cooperation with international organisations and national statistical services of western countries was the conduct of methodological seminars and study courses for the specialists of the CIS countries with financial support from the international organisations. Seminars and study courses were organised by the CIS Statcommittee jointly with such international organisations as Eurostat, (in the framework of the TACIS programme), the World Bank, IMF, ILO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNECE, Unescap and the Paris21 Consortium.

Technical assistance in the conduct of the seminars was rendered as well by the statistical services of Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France and a number of other western countries. For the period 1992–2006, as a whole, 60 international seminars, meetings and study courses with a total amount of about 2 600 participants were conducted. During the same period, the CIS Statcommittee received 390 foreign delegations from international organisations and western countries and sent more than 250 specialists on a mission to these organisations and countries, mainly at the expense of the Tacis programme and programmes of the World Bank, IMF and UNFPA.

By Mikhail A. Korolev, Chairman Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.



In order to expand international cooperation, the CIS Statcommittee has signed memorandums of understanding with the OECD, Paris21 and the World Bank. Photo: Johan Selenius

For further information:
<http://www.cisstat.com/eng>

EU-EFTA: united means stronger!

The EFTA team: Erica Barley, Ingrid Horverak, Anne Mari Auno and Deniz Kutay-Nicholas on the bottom row. Gabriel Gamez, Valérie Papin and Volker Täube in the middle row and on the top Peder Næs, Richard Ragnarøn and Ömar Hardarson.
Photo: Christine Ardillac

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organisation for the promotion of free trade and economic integration to benefit its four Member States: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Since the beginning of the 1990s, EFTA has progressively developed a statistical cooperation policy with the EU Member States and Eurostat.



EFTA was established in 1960 in response to the European Economic Community and is one of the world's largest free trade networks, having relations with more than 50 countries and territories.

The Association is responsible for the management of:

- the EFTA Convention, which forms the legal basis of the organisation and governs free trade relations between the EFTA States;
- EFTA's worldwide network of free trade and partnership agreements;
- the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, which enables three of the four EFTA Member States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) to fully participate in the EU's internal market.

EEA statistical cooperation

The European Economic Area (EEA) unites the 27 EU Member States and the three EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) into an internal market governed by the same basic rules. These rules aim to enable goods, services, capital and persons to move freely about the EEA in an open and competitive environment, a concept referred to as the four freedoms.

The purpose of the statistical cooperation within the framework of the European Economic Area is to develop an integrated European statistical system (ESS) which can give coherent descriptions of all fields of cooperation covered by the EEA Treaty. This statistical system should also be able to

describe the effects of this European integration process on different economical, social and environmental aspects.

More concretely, the aim of the EEA statistical cooperation is to transmit statistical information from EEA EFTA States to Eurostat for storage, processing and dissemination.

The legal bases for cooperation in the field of statistics under the EEA Agreement are Article 76 and Protocol 30. Annex XXI to the agreement contains common rules (*acquis communautaire*) on statistics that are binding for both contracting parties (EU and EEA EFTA).

EEA EFTA States are members of the European statistical system and therefore their experts fully participate, without the right to vote, in all committees, working groups and other bodies which assist Eurostat in the management and development of statistical programmes and actions. This so-called 'policy-shaping' process allows EEA EFTA experts to contribute to the shaping of EU legislation at its drafting phase by the European Commission. It is also important to emphasise that, except in comitology procedure, there is no formal voting and that in any case EEA EFTA States can express their opinion.

In counterpart, EEA EFTA States contribute financially to the European statistical programme and defray the additional costs incurred by Eurostat for storing, processing and disseminating their data. An additional contribution in kind consists of four experts seconded to Eurostat. These secondments are important since they secure the transfer of knowledge and promote integration of the European statistical system. Eurostat continuously expresses their interest in maintaining this high level of EFTA expert involvement.

The institutional set-up of EFTA statistical cooperation is somewhat complex since Switzerland is not part of the EEA. Nevertheless, from 1 January 2007, a bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU governs the statistical cooperation between both parties. This agreement ensures the full participation of Switzerland in the European statistical system and the publication of Swiss data in all Eurostat dissemination tools as the EEA agreement in the field of statistics for the other EFTA States.

EU–EFTA statistical cooperation with third countries

The aim of technical assistance in the field of statistics is to provide international organisations, national decision makers, and other stakeholders with reliable tools for the monitoring of the economic and social transition process. In the medium term, the production and dissemination of comparable statistics within a broad Europe, including the Mediterranean area, will contribute to the economic prosperity and the political stability of the region.

Thus, EFTA and the European Union have a common interest in assisting countries neighbouring the enlarged Euro-



Liechtenstein's Deputy Prime Minister Klaus Tschütscher greets Gabriel Gamez, EFTA Statistical Adviser, when the European statistical institutes received the code of practice. Photo: EFTA

pean Economic Area to develop their statistical capacity and to harmonise statistical methods and standards with European norms.

In January 2005, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on technical cooperation in the field of statistics between the EFTA Secretariat and Eurostat came into force. The MoU's overall objective is to avoid gaps or overlapping in technical assistance toward countries where the European Union is also active, through direct involvement of the four EFTA States in statistical programmes run by the European Commission. The MoU, which covers a three-year period (2005–07), involves EFTA funds totalling EUR 1.74 million and two national experts seconded to Eurostat as part of this contribution, to ensure continuity of support and EFTA visibility in the overall programming and management of EU–EFTA actions.

EFTA's involvement in technical cooperation programmes under the MoU gives priority to countries that have concluded declarations on cooperation or free trade agreements with EFTA. Support is mainly granted to developing countries and economies in transition in the western Balkans (Cards), Mediterranean regions (Medstat) but also to recent and prospective partner countries to the eastern boundary of the enlarged EU (Tacis).

It is important to emphasise that in spite of the relatively modest amounts allocated by EFTA for statistical cooperation compared to the European Commission, the relatively flexible EFTA procedures make it possible for EFTA NSIs to obtain strong visibility towards the ESS as towards recipient countries.

EFTA contribution to the European statistical training programme

For maintaining a high level of competence and ensuring data consistency throughout the European statistical system (ESS), statisticians require continuous training in new methods, new techniques and best practices. EFTA is actively involved in the planning and the implementation of the Euro-



The purpose of the statistical cooperation within the framework of the European Economic Area (EEA) is to develop an integrated European statistical system which can give coherent descriptions of all fields of cooperation covered by the EEA Treaty. Lake Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: Peteris Vegis

pean statistical training programme through a 'gentleman's agreement' with Eurostat.

In order to secure the full participation of EFTA statisticians in the ESTP, two courses were financed by EFTA in 2005. These were organised by Statistics Norway and the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, on business registers and on advanced sampling techniques. In total, more than 50 statisticians from EFTA States and EU Member States participated in these courses. In return, EFTA statisticians were allowed to participate in all ESTP courses organised by Eurostat and EU Member States.

The same arrangement has been concluded from 2006 onwards. For 2006, EFTA NSIs have committed funds for the organisation of the three following courses:

- Data analysis and data modelling, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 18–22 September 2006;
- Use of administrative registers in production of statistics, Oslo, Norway, 2–5 October 2006;
- User-friendly dissemination of official statistics on the Internet, Oslo, Norway, 7–10 November 2006.

EFTA Statistical Adviser's Office in Luxembourg

The EFTA Statistical Adviser's Office (EFTA SAO) was created as a liaison office between Eurostat and the EFTA national statistical institutes. EFTA SAO's main objective is to sustain the integration of the EFTA States in the evolving European statistical system, and thus to provide harmonised and comparable statistics supporting the general cooperation process between EFTA and the EU within and outside the EEA Agreement. EFTA SAO consists of five people: the Statistical Adviser and his deputy, two secretaries and a trainee.

EFTA SAO is responsible, inter alia, for the following tasks.

- Follow-up and implementation of the procedures for the incorporation of EC statistical acts into the Annex XXI to

the EEA Treaty. New EC legal acts relevant for the EEA are then formally included in Annex XXI after adoption by the EEA Joint Committee. The Joint Committee, which generally meets once a month, is made up of ambassadors of the EEA EFTA States and representatives from the European Commission.

- Contribution to the development of the EEA statistical programme. The EEA statistical programme is a subset of the EC statistical programme and is revised annually.
- Support of the production and dissemination of EEA statistics (via Eurostat). This also includes a yearly assessment of the inclusion of EFTA data in Eurostat publications and databases. For most of these publications, the inclusion rate developed positively in the last years.
- Informing the EFTA national statistical authorities of Eurostat meetings, and coordinating EFTA experts' participation in these meetings. All invitations for EFTA experts have to be sent through EFTA SAO.
- Contact point between Eurostat and the EFTA national statistical institutes in the recruitment procedure of EFTA seconded national experts to Eurostat.
- In close cooperation with Eurostat, designing and implementing EFTA technical assistance projects in the field of statistics for third countries and participation in the European statistical training programme.
- If EFTA SAO is institutionally part of the EFTA Secretariat, located in Geneva and Brussels, its driving force is the so-called 'Group of the Heads' which meets at least once a year and gathers the directors-general of the four EFTA national statistical institutes.
- In conclusion, it is important to stress that the success of the EU–EFTA statistical cooperation is mainly due to the willingness of all parties involved to work for the development of a broad and integrated European Statistical system. The fact that EFTA SAO is located in Eurostat premises in Luxembourg proves that the EU–EFTA statistical cooperation is a success story.

By Gabriel Gamez, EFTA Statistical Adviser.

For further information:

<http://secretariat.efta.int/Web/ExternalRelations/TechnicalCooperation>

Paris21: improving data for the millennium review

The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, Paris21, was launched in 1999 in response to a United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution on rationalising and improving statistics and indicators. The main objective for the initiative is to develop a culture of transparent, evidence-based policymaking and implementation which serves to improve governance and government effectiveness in reducing poverty and achieving the millennium development goals. The partnership helps to achieve this by stimulating greater demand, availability and use of better statistics and statistical analysis in national, international and civil society decision-making.

Participants in a workshop on national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) for the French-speaking countries in central Africa, Mali, February 2005. Photo: Paris21



Over the years, the focus on results-based management and on improved delivery and impact of aid has increased. National policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware that strengthening statistical capacity is essential to support the design, monitoring, and evaluation of national development plans, such as poverty reduction and sector strategies, and the millennium development goals (MDGs). In recognition of this reliance on good, timely statistics, the Second International Round Table on Managing for Development Results in 2004 issued the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS), which encourages, inter alia, all developing countries to design and implement a national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS).

Building statistical capacity

An NSDS is a strategy for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system (NSS). The NSDS provides a vision for where the NSS should be in 5–10 years' time and sets milestones for getting there. It provides a robust framework and action plan for building the statistical capacity to meet both current and future data needs. In particular, the aim is to align statistical development with wider poverty-focused national development programmes and strategies. The NSDS approach has been developed in response to the constraints and issues that countries have faced during the last years. It builds on the results of past experiences both in developing countries and in more advanced countries.

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PARIS21
Hosted by OECD/D/DCD
2, Rue André Pascal 91775 PARIS Cedex 16
Tel: +33 1 45 24 90 51
Télécopie: +33 1 45 24 94 06
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BECOME A MEMBER
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Starting in 2004, Paris21 has co-organised nearly 20 regional workshops on designing NSDSs in the Arab States, Asia, Central America, and sub-Saharan Africa regions. And in collaboration with several regional and international partners, Paris21 co-launched a reference regional strategic framework for statistical development in Africa, whose overall objective was to formulate a regional strategy for guiding future statistical capacity building activities on the continent.

Supporting statistical development

Paris21 has focused its efforts on assisting low-income countries to design, implement, and monitor an NSDS in order to have, among other things, better statistics for national and international use by the time of the next millennium review in 2010. Paris21 supports country NSDS teams primarily through the following types of activities.

- Development of NSDS methodology: Paris21 offers methodological advice and documentation, targeting different audiences and purposes. Examples include a guide to designing an NSDS, a guide to developing a policy-based NSDS and a paper exploring issues in design and implementation planning. All these documents can be downloaded from the online NSDS knowledge base.
- Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools: the advocacy tools are designed to assist countries

and donor institutions to make the case for increased support to statistics and for adopting a strategic approach to statistical development. Recently developed tools include two statistical advocacy films featuring interviews with the Presidents of Mali and Senegal and African statisticians, a scholarly paper entitled 'Measuring up to the measurement problem' that has spawned a series of pamphlets and leaflets, and a 'Frequently asked questions on NSDS' flier.

- Implementation of regional programmes: the main components of Paris21's regional programmes include (a) establishing baseline assessments; (b) organising regional events; (c) undertaking regional advocacy efforts to garner political support for the design and implementation of NSDS; (d) consolidating partner efforts at the national level; (e) mobilising technical and financial support for the design and implementation of NSDS; and (f) reporting on progress made.
- Promotion of partnership and donor collaboration: Paris21 encourages and facilitates information sharing and aid harmonisation among donors. Examples include its light reporting exercise (LRE) and the co-organisation of two Forums on African Statistical Development, which brought together statistical directors from all African countries as well as all technical and financial partners supporting African statistics.

Bringing the right partners together

Among Paris21's greatest strengths is its ability to bring to the table a wide range of technical and financial partners supporting statistical development. Its efforts in promoting partnership and collaboration have yielded many crucial results.

In early 2006, and in collaboration with international and regional partners, Paris21 produced a worldwide report on the status of NSDS preparation in developing countries. The purpose was to identify and monitor — for NSDS country teams, national policymakers, bilateral donors, regional and international institutions, and all other development partners — where countries currently stand in their strategic statistical planning and what remains to be done if NSDS targets are to be achieved.

The report found that, of the 105 countries considered, 34 had statistical strategies in place, 54 were at various stages in preparing strategies, while 17 countries neither had strategies in place nor had started to design one, though a number of these had expressed their intention to do so. It should be noted that some countries with existing strategies also intend to update and develop them, following the NSDS approach.

The goals of the NSDS progress report complement those of the LRE, whose specific objectives were to increase knowledge on what development partners are doing to support statistical capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa, provide information to improve donor harmonisation and collaboration in the statistical area, and identify countries or statistical

areas where additional support is needed. The UN Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities has recently agreed to the creation of an inter-agency task team whose function will be to harmonise the LRE with similar, existing reporting systems; develop an online database for its results that meets the requirements of different partners; and oversee the initiative's updating and expansion.

Tangible results

Paris21's partnership and donor collaboration activities — including the NSDS report and LRE — have led to positive, concrete action.

Regular videoconference meetings between the African Development Bank, Afristat, Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Paris21, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank, and other partners have been organised to coordinate support to African country NSDS processes. The gaps in support to African countries that were highlighted in the NSDS and LRE reports have also incited partners to mobilise significant technical and financial support. The African Development Bank has now fully adopted and mainstreamed NSDS into its statistical activities. Paris21 and the IMF have conducted joint missions to assist African countries to integrate NSDS into poverty reduction strategy processes and to comply with general data dissemination system practices. The World Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) has been reoriented

toward supporting NSDSs and aligned more closely with the results agenda and MAPS. The fund expects to finance the design of more than 30 NSDSs over the next three years.

Overcoming obstacles and paving the way forward

The LRE report identified several issues as hindering development partner efforts to deliver their support to statistical capacity building. These included insufficient donor collaboration and a shortage of qualified experts to provide technical assistance.

To address these and other issues, Paris21, at the Third International Round Table on Managing for Development Results held in Vietnam in February, discussed what is working and what is not working in building statistical capacity, outlining the types and forms of technical and financial assistance, experiences of beneficiary countries in receiving this support, and summaries of case studies on the delivery of aid. The intention will be to propose next steps — a follow-up to the MAPS — on applying the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to statistics and scaling-up technical and financial support to developing countries' national statistical systems.

By Eric Bensef, Project Officer and Editor, Paris21

International round tables on managing for development results

At the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002, the presidents of the multilateral development banks called for better measuring, monitoring and managing for results. This agenda has been developed further at international round tables in Washington, DC, in 2002, Marrakech, Morocco, in 2004 and next in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2007.

www.managingfordevelopmentresults.org

Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS)

At the 2004 International Round Table on Managing for Development Results, participants agreed on a global action plan for statistics (MAPS) which comprises six items.

The first set of actions addresses national needs:

1. mainstream strategic planning of statistics
2. prepare for the 2010 population census round

3. increase investment in statistics.

The second set addresses international responsibilities:

4. set up an international household survey network
5. improve MDG monitoring
6. improve international accountability in statistics.

www.mfdr.org/documents/MarrakechActionPlanforStatistics.pdf

Online NSDS knowledge base

Look under 'Designing an NSDS' on www.paris21.org

Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

The Paris Declaration is an international agreement on harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators.

www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclaration

For further information:

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The UN: assisting countries to monitor development



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The availability of good statistics and the capacity of governments, donors and international organisations to measure, monitor and report systematically on progress in all policy areas lies at the heart of development policy and the achievement of the millennium development goals. Scaling-up of national statistical services is necessary to produce data for monitoring measurable outcomes. The essence is that good policies, based on empirical evidence and a clear understanding of the development process, lead to improved outcomes consistent with national priorities and objectives.

The millennium development goals (MDGs) provided a unique opportunity to raise awareness that a sound quantitative knowledge of progress and gaps is an important element in reaching the final goals set by the Millennium Declaration, as well as the other internationally agreed development goals. The monitoring requirements, however, have also clearly uncovered significant shortcomings in the availability and use of data to monitor development efforts. Producing the necessary data and reaching all target groups of users with adequate tools, especially in countries where resources are limited, is a significant challenge. The current situation of statistical services constrains the effectiveness and achievement of national development planning and policy in many countries.

Periodic assessment of MDGs

Since the periodic assessment of progress towards the MDGs began over five years ago, a number of initiatives have been launched to address the needs of developing countries to strengthen their statistical capacity to produce, analyse and disseminate data. A major step in this direction was in 2004, with the endorsement of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics — Better Data for Better Results, an Action Plan for Improving Development Statistics, by the Second International Round Table on Managing for Development Results, comprising aid recipients and donor stakeholders.

In line with the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, the Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG Indicators — responsible for the preparation of data and analysis to monitor global trends in MDGs and coordinated by the UN Statistics Division — has also made statistical capacity one of its priority areas of work and has been working to define priorities and provide recommendations for actions to be undertaken at both the national and the international levels. International agencies, donors and representatives from national statistical offices have worked together to identify national priorities in capacity building and to make specific recom-

mendations for the improvement of the delivery and coordination of statistical assistance to countries.

More recently, the United Nations Statistical Commission, comprising representatives of national statistical services, has also called the attention of Member States to the urgent need to build statistical capacity in countries where resources are limited. A resolution on statistical capacity building was proposed by the Commission in March 2006 and later approved by the Economic and Social Council in July 2006.

UNSD in statistical capacity building

The statistical capacity building programme of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) is an integral part of the division's work programme and is closely intertwined to the division's work on international standard setting. The links across the three main elements of the UNSD statistical programme — normative, analytical and operational — facilitate the efficient transfer of international standards and practices to countries that need assistance in developing their statistical system.

The principles guiding the technical cooperation programme of the Division are that technical cooperation activities should be demand-driven, responsive to local conditions, nationally controlled and well coordinated.

Improving coordination between partners on the agenda

The improvement of the coordination of development cooperation work among international partners has become crucial to ensure the effective delivery of technical assistance. The UNSD is mandated by the Statistical Commission to assist in donor coordination in statistical capacity activities. The division has recently explored new formats for coordinating



The world's targets for safe drinking water are in sight, but 18 % of the world's population still does not have access to safe drinking water and more than four people die every hour from diseases associated with unsafe drinking water. Most of them are children.
Photo: © EC / R. Canessa

work and establishing cooperation with other partners. One example is the recently launched project in the southern African region, where the steering committee responsible for setting the structure and monitoring the implementation of the project also includes — besides national chief statisticians — international agencies and donors. This would allow the various stakeholders to benefit from each other's ongoing activities, avoiding duplication and helping countries to integrate the various components of the project into their overall national statistical development strategies.

The Division works in close partnership with a number of partners, including among others the DevInfo Development Group, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP and bilateral donors such as the UK Department for International Development and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

The UN Statistics Division has also focused on improving south–south collaboration and building networks of statisticians in regions and sub-regions. This has been the approach adopted in the regional and sub-regional projects conducted by the Division, all relying on existing regional and sub-regional organisations and networks, in an effort to create strong communities of statisticians who can draw on each other's strengths and achievements.

Assisting with experts, training and data dissemination

The Division draws on its technical expertise to provide support to countries in all areas covered by its regular work programme — economic statistics, social and demographic statistics, trade statistics, environment statistics, gender statistics, data and metadata dissemination and exchange. It provides advisory services to national statistical offices to help them develop their statistical system, recommending steps to deal with their organisational structure, legislative framework and required resources.

south–south and intra-regional cooperation. There are currently two projects being conducted in the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) regions, both aiming at strengthening statistical capacity building in support to the MDGs. Similar new projects, also aimed at the improvement of data for monitoring the MDGs and structured around sub-regional organisations, are in the pipeline.

The Division's handbooks and guidelines, developed on the basis of intergovernmental recommendations and agreements, are widely used as training tools in national and regional programmes and by statisticians in countries in the development of their data collection programmes. The Division has issued 25 new handbooks and manuals since 2000.

An important component of the Division's programme focuses on enhancing the data dissemination infrastructure of national statistics systems in an effort to improve the use of data for evidence-based policy design and evaluation among users of official statistics, especially millennium development goal statistics and indicators. As part of this, the Division collaborates with the DevInfo group to support Member States in the use of common database systems and platforms for tracking national human development indicators. MDGInfo, an adaptation of DevInfo, a technology specifically designed to support governments in MDG monitoring, has been issued for two consecutive years, in 2005 and 2006.

Technical assistance is delivered by UNSD through the following.

- Interregional advisers: senior statisticians with expertise in high-demand areas, who provide countries with technical advice upon request. The current priority areas are national accounts, population and housing censuses and statistical organisation and management.
- Fellowships: a component of the technical cooperation programme intended to respond to specific needs of Member States for enhanced national skills development and training.

- Training workshops: workshops, usually with a regional focus and implemented in close cooperation with the Regional Commissions and other regional and subregional organisations. Each workshop is dedicated to one specific statistical subject matter from the broad spectrum of the Division's technical expertise (census taking, social statistics, MDG indicators, national accounts, environmental accounts, industry statistics, energy statistics, environmental statistics, trade statistics, classifications, statistical organisation, etc).

Being part of the global statistical community — one benefit

Member States who have worked with UNSD as partners in technical cooperation programmes have consistently provided positive feedback, pointing to measurable impacts on national and sub-regional statistical programmes. One frequently quoted result is that cooperation with the Division instills in national statistical systems a sense of being part of the larger global statistical community. In particular, the development account projects — a funding mechanism provided by the General Assembly — have created strong sub-regional networks of statisticians, at the management as well as the working level. Further evidence of the tangible impact of Division projects is the adoption and use by many countries of international recommendations and standards. This is true both as regards the overall organisation of statistical systems — countries have applied UNSD recommenda-

tions in the restructuring of their national statistical systems — and for the implementation of recommendations in specific statistical fields.

There remain, however, a number of challenges for the Division to be able to deliver its assistance effectively and for countries to fully benefit from existing initiatives. First, partners still have a long way to go to improve their coordination mechanisms and to increase the number of opportunities for full cooperation in jointly-developed programmes. Initiatives by international agencies and donors should be built around the existing statistical national strategies and master plans and always be in accordance with the plans. Also, in order for capacity building activities to be sustainable, most national statistical initiatives should be covered by national budgets and supported by a strong political commitment.

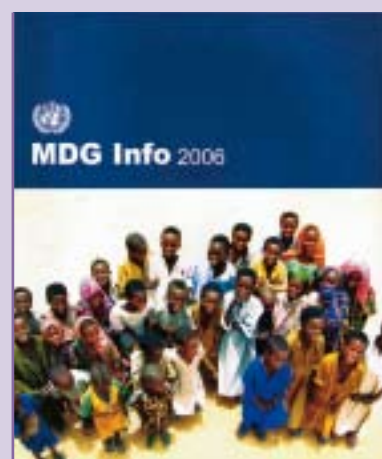
Coordination also needs to be improved within countries — between all agencies producing statistics and the National Statistical Office, with the latter being established as a fully independent institution and with a clear mandate for the collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics. This in turn, would also facilitate coordination of international partners who normally deal with different counterparts — from national statistical offices to different line ministries. Finally, the donor community needs to recognise that although statistics are increasingly recognised as an indispensable tool for development, resources devoted to statistics are still relatively poor as compared to funds devoted to other development initiatives.

By Francesca Perucci, United Nations Statistics Division.

Eight millennium development goals

In September 2000, leaders from 189 nations agreed on a vision for the future: a world with less poverty, hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and their infants, better educated children, equal opportunities for women, and a healthier environment; a world in which developed and developing countries worked in partnership for the betterment of all. This vision took the shape of eight millennium development goals, which provide a framework for development planning for countries around the world, and time-bound targets by which progress can be measured.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development



To help track progress towards the millennium development goals, international indicators selected by national statistical experts are being used to assess progress over the period from 1990 to 2015, when targets are expected to be met. The *MDG info 2006* report presents the latest assessment on how far we have come, and how far we have to go in reaching the goals, in each of the world's regions.

The World Bank: improving statistical capacity

The World Bank is an international development agency, working to reduce poverty by financing projects and programmes, advising countries, and facilitating knowledge development.

Africa Development Indicators 2006 confirm that things are changing in new and unexpected ways. Growth rates over the last 10 years have caught up and, in fact, exceed those in developing countries. Photo: World Bank / Arne Hoel



The World Bank's concern with statistical data stems from the need to get better results from development activities, to measure success and target resources efficiently. But many national statistical systems are inadequate for these purposes. In Africa, for instance, barely half of all residents have been enumerated in a population census in the last 10 years. Yet censuses are often the only source of data on the geographical distribution and the age and gender structure of the population.

The World Bank's priority is to help countries improve their capacity to produce and use official statistics. Countries need better data to manage for development results, and they also need to provide data required by the international development community. Following discussions at a major international conference, the Second Round Table on Managing for Results held in Morocco in February 2004, statisticians and development practitioners agreed on a global action plan known as the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, or MAPS for short.

An action plan for statistics

The key approach of MAPS is the preparation and implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics.

These assess weaknesses in statistical systems and develop plans for improvement which are closely aligned with the needs of data users and national development processes. Significant funding from donor agencies and governments is needed to improve statistical capacity, and these development strategies provide the means to put forward options and to show the effectiveness of better statistics.

MAPS also includes other objectives. It aims for full participation in the next global census round in 2010. It also aims to improve international household survey programmes and to ensure that countries have more sustainable household survey programmes. And it aims to make short-term improvements in the availability of key indicators such as those used in poverty reduction strategies and for monitoring the millennium development goals (MDG).

The action plan can only be carried out through an international partnership of statistical practitioners and the development community. For instance, Paris21 (the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, housed in OECD) provides an important focal point for advocacy and guidance on developing strategies for improving statistical systems. Several bilateral and multilateral partners have supported the costs of strategy preparation in countries, in-

cluding grants through the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) administered by the World Bank.

Implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics needs investment by governments and support from development partners. The World Bank has designed a specific lending programme — called Statcap — to provide countries with financial resources for this purpose. Since the first two projects were approved for Ukraine (USD 32 million) and Burkina Faso (USD 10 million), Nigeria has used the approach within a larger programme (USD 15.6 million of a USD 140 million economic reform project), and Tajikistan has obtained a credit of USD 1 million. In many cases there are co-financing arrangements with other donors. Projects are being developed in other countries, including Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, and Sri Lanka.

Another element of MAPS — improving household survey programmes — is being addressed through the creation of the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) in late 2004. The network has compiled documentation on over 2 700 household surveys. Plans for future surveys by international agencies are being monitored and will be published in a system which will show these plans on a country-by-country basis.

Making better use of data

Improving capacity to collect and produce statistics is important, but statistics have no value unless they are used and are accessible to users. An important part of the strategy to improve statistical capacity is to make better use of data from household surveys and administrative records. The IHSN has made good progress in improving access to household survey datasets. A major achievement has been the creation of the Microdata Management Toolkit, which provides a simple method for documenting and disseminating survey data according to international standards and best practices. Work is also being done to help statistics producers preserve anonymity of respondents and to respect confidentiality concerns, by providing tools and best practice methods. These initiatives have been welcomed by many countries, particularly those with limited capacity and experience in this area.

Partners have also been working to improve access to data, and to make better use of those data to improve estimates of key indicators. A good example is the work done by Unicef and UNDP to develop a software tool, Devinfo, to help countries collate and disseminate estimates of key indicators to a wide audience. Many countries have used this system, and Malawi and Tanzania have piloted a version which uses the web. UNDP

has complemented this support with a large-scale 'statistical literacy' training programme on the use and interpretation of the indicators used to assess progress to the MDGs.

Accelerating data improvements

Data quality and availability improvements often take time in statistical capacity improvement programmes, because institutional change and development is needed. So a programme for accelerating data improvements in pilot countries has been launched recently to support MAPS. This accelerated data programme is focused on household surveys and censuses, because these sources provide estimates for many social indicators. In developing countries — where administrative systems may be weak — they often provide the quickest and most efficient way of getting key statistics and of measuring the impact of development on people's lives.

The approach used is determined by country circumstances. In some cases, improvements result from better use of existing data, and in others new or modified survey programmes are needed. In all cases the first step is a comprehensive inventory of data sources. The second step is an assessment of data quality and timeliness. Third, and only where appropriate, an improved data collection effort based on a continuous household survey programme is designed in partnership with the national statistical authorities.

Looking ahead

Among international partners the World Bank has an important role, through advocacy and through financial instruments such as the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building, the Statcap multi-country lending programme and grants for development partners.

Our view is that the statistical capacity of the developing countries is improving to meet new demands for official statistics at national and international levels. This results from efforts of countries and the international community. But this progress needs to be accelerated. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics will continue to provide the framework for the World Bank's programme, and, in the short to medium term, the accelerated data programme is a practical and workable solution to accelerate improvements in key data areas. The programme is important for Africa, where improvements are most urgently needed, are most difficult to make, yet potentially provide the largest returns.

By Shaida Badiee, Director of the Development Data Group of the World Bank.

For further information:

www.worldbank.org/data
www.surveynetwork.org

A prime example of international statistical cooperation: purchasing power parities

The PPP team in Eurostat. Silke Stapel, Michael Geothals and Isabella Ben Charrada on the first row and Pille Palojärvi, Paul Konijn, Carlos Diaz Muriel, Jarko Pasanen and Sebastian Reinecke on the second row. Photo: Christine Ardillac

In their simplest form, purchasing power parities (PPPs) are nothing more than price relatives that show the ratio of the prices in national currencies of the same good or service in different countries. For example, if the price of a hamburger in France is USD 2.84 and in the United States is USD 2.20, the PPP for hamburgers between France and the United States is USD 2.84 to USD 2.20 or 1.29 euros to the dollar. In other words, for every dollar spent on hamburgers in the United States, USD 1.29 would have to be spent in France in order to obtain the same quantity and quality – or volume – of hamburgers. PPPs are still price relatives when they refer to a product group or to an aggregate or to GDP.



Purchasing power parities are of interest to an increasing number of international and national users. International organisations, government agencies, universities and research institutes use PPPs as inputs into economic research and policy analysis requiring comparisons between countries. PPPs are employed as currency converters to generate volume measures with which to compare levels of economic performance, economic welfare, consumption, in-

vestment, overall productivity and government expenditure on defence, health, etc. They are also used as price measures to compare price levels, price structures, price convergence and competitiveness. Increasingly, PPPs are also employed for poverty analysis.

PPPs are statistical indicators which would not exist without international statistical cooperation. Because of their very

nature as multilateral spatial price differentials, no single national statistical institute could establish them on its own. The matrix can only be established when the numerous input data of all countries, stemming from various price statistics and the national accounts, are combined by a supra-national statistical body.

In the European Union, PPPs have particular importance for monitoring economic policies and administration. Some 30 % of the total EU budget is spent on the Structural and Cohesion Funds, the overall aim of which is to reduce economic disparities gradually between and within EU Member States. The allocation of the bulk of the funds is made on the basis of PPP-converted regional GDP per capita. PPPs are also used to determine the correction coefficients for EU officials' salaries stationed outside Brussels and Luxembourg and for pensions.

Origins from the 1950s

The origins of international price and volume comparisons of GDP can be traced back to the experimental comparisons carried out by the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) — the forerunner of OECD — in the 1950s. Initially, it covered France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. Subsequently, it was expanded to include Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway.

Relying on the OEEC experiences the International Comparison Project (ICP) was launched in the late 1960s. It started as a research project, but its ultimate goal was to set up worldwide PPP-based comparisons of GDP on a regular basis. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the University of Pennsylvania shared the responsibility for the project with the latter taking the leading role. The project's initial task was to develop a methodology which would serve as a comprehensive system of international comparisons based on PPPs. The next task was to test the methodology by making actual comparisons using PPPs. Thus, the first three phases of the ICP — 1970, 1973 and 1975 — were essentially experimental in character.

After Phase III, there were three major developments. Firstly, the ICP became a regular part of the work programme of the UNSD with the University of Pennsylvania advising on methodological issues. Secondly, Eurostat started to play an increasingly important role, organising the comparisons for the EU, providing technical and financial assistance to regional comparisons in Africa and encouraging the OECD to become involved in the work. The third and most significant development was the regionalisation of the ICP.

New ICP round in 2005

Two phases of the ICP were completed after regionalisation, which covered 60 and 64 countries, respectively. Phase VI, covering 83 countries and having 1993 as the reference year, was started but not completed. After Phase VI failed to make a world comparison, an evaluation report was produced by a consultant contracted by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) was completed. It found that PPPs and PPP-related statistics are needed, but that the ICP was not produc-

ing these data on a timely and regular basis for a sufficient number of countries as required by important potential users such as the World Bank. Moreover it indicated that the ICP was missing a governance and management structure and lacked sufficient resources and the confidence of the participating countries in the quality of other countries' data.

The UNSC response to the report was to ask the World Bank — the *de facto* global coordinator of the ICP since 1993 — to propose a strategy for a comprehensive solution to the deficiencies identified by the consultant. In March 2002, UNSC agreed on the implementation plan and on a new ICP phase, after the World Bank had embarked on a successful major fund-raising exercise.

The reference year for the new round is 2005, with first results being scheduled for publication by the end of 2006. Regional comparisons will be organised by the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Other institutions also responsible for these assessments are Statistics Canada, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics (Goskomstat-Russia), Eurostat and the OECD. A global office was established at the World Bank to provide overall coordination and to ensure technical and procedural uniformity across the regions.

A new chapter with the European Comparison Programme

One of the regional comparison programmes that resulted from the regionalisation of the ICP was the European Comparison Programme (ECP). It was launched at the 27th plenary session of the Conference of Europe Statisticians (Geneva, June 1979). The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is responsible for the ECP and publishes the results of its comparisons, but the actual comparisons are organised by other agencies. This is because the ECP is an amalgam of independent comparisons involving different groups of countries. The Eurostat–OECD PPP programme is central to the ECP and brings with it coverage beyond Europe through the inclusion of non-European OECD countries.

EU and OECD comparisons

The Eurostat–OECD PPP programme was established in the early 1980s to compare the GDPs of the Member States of the EU and the member countries of the OECD. This remains the purpose of the programme, although its coverage has been extended to include countries in line for EU membership and the ones from the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia with which Eurostat and the OECD have programmes of technical cooperation in statistics.

From 1980 to 1990, Eurostat comparisons took place every five years and involved mainly EU Member States and countries in line for EU membership. After 1990, Eurostat adopted



In May 2006, Fred Vogel (World Bank), Yuri Dhikanov (World Bank), Silke Stapel (Eurostat), Yonas Biru (World Bank), David Roberts (OECD) and Sebastian Reinecke (Eurostat) met for consultations on the International Comparison Programme in Luxembourg.

the rolling benchmark approach in order to distribute workload and resources more evenly over time and started making annual comparisons. The number of participating countries rose from 14 in 1991 to 19 in 1994. In 1999, the number reached 31 with the inclusion of the 13 countries that were candidates for EU membership. At the same time the Eurostat programme was also regionalised into three country groups in order to manage better the increasing number of participating countries. In 2006, a fourth group, covering the western Balkan countries joined the programme, bringing the total number of participants in Eurostat annual comparisons up to 38. The four groups are coordinated on behalf of Eurostat by the NSIs of Finland, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia.

The OECD began organising comparisons for those OECD member countries that were not included in Eurostat comparisons in the early 1980s. The OECD worked closely with Eurostat during the 1985 and 1990 comparisons. Formal agreements between the two organisations were made to establish the Eurostat–OECD PPP programme during the 1990 round. Since 1990, the joint programme has covered all OECD member countries. OECD comparisons also cover Russia, which is included in the regular publications of the joint programme. While OECD follows the rolling benchmark approach for consumer prices, results for the joint programme

are established only every three years. The next joint comparison will be for 2005.

An effective global development partnership

Eurostat and the OECD also coordinate activities with the ICP for the 48 countries currently covered by their joint programme in order to establish the global comparison 2005 as a partnership effort of the two programmes, the joint Eurostat and OECD programme and the ICP. The two institutions are represented on both the ICP Executive Board and the ICP Technical Advisory Group. The partnership between the Eurostat–OECD PPP programme and the ICP is an excellent example of an effective global development partnership between international organisations. The two programmes collaborate on methodological improvements for the international comparison of prices and volumes and the establishment, validation and publication of the global results, although they are managed and organised independently.

By Silke Stapel, National Accounts — Methodology and Analysis Unit, Purchasing Power Parities Section, Eurostat.

For further information:

This article is largely based on the joint *Eurostat–OECD PPP methodological manual*.

The manual can be found in electronic form on the Eurostat website.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

E-mail: silke.stapel@ec.europa.eu or paul.konijn@ec.europa.eu

Pursuing powerful partnerships: the Mercosur experience



Working meeting with representatives of the EC–Mercosur statistical cooperation project.

The *Mercado Comum do Sul, Mercosur, was created by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in March 1991. Its purpose is to promote free trade and the fluid movement of goods, peoples and currency through the establishment of a single market. Cooperation also goes into the field of statistics where the aim is to enable the production of comparable data. In 1998, the European Union and Mercosur signed a statistical cooperation agreement and two years later a similar deal was signed between the EU and Chile. The results of the agreements are important synergies between the national statistical offices on the one hand and the two blocs on the other.*

The national statistical institutes (NSIs) of the Mercosur countries regularly participate in various international fora that supplement national and/or regional efforts to improve the information produced by the offices in the region and make it more comparable. Within the region there is also a strong tendency towards bilateral, intra-bloc or inter-bloc technical cooperation activities which help to improve official statistics and their comparability at international level. However, the absence of a common statistical body within Mercosur, and therefore a shared statistical policy, combined with budgetary difficulties, have resulted in a certain lack of coordination between the national statistical offices when developing their products.

EU–Mercosur cooperation

In 1998, a statistical cooperation agreement between the Mercosur countries and the European Union was signed. It was followed by a similar agreement between the EU and Chile in 2000.

The agreements, which ended on 30 June 2003, significantly improved statistical integration between the Mercosur countries and Chile, and strengthened economic and commercial relations between the two regions. All involved have appreciated the benefits of this cooperation. The positive understanding derives from the fact that statistical harmonisation has had a strategic dimension, both for intra-regional relations and for bi-regional relations. It has also served as a pathway for future coordination and integration.

There were four main activities and arrangements that featured in the cooperation. Firstly 10 working groups with two representatives per country were established. Each group

was coordinated by two European experts. The thematic areas addressed by the working groups ranged from customs and foreign trade, to social statistics and relations with users and dissemination policy. There was also a group composed of the directors or presidents of the NSIs and the project's national coordinators that dealt with guidelines for statistical information systems.

Secondly, training for the members of the working groups were organised. The contents were defined on the basis of their needs, allied to the themes and innovations discussed during the meetings. The training modules were organised and conducted by European experts, who were thus able to bring into play the experience and expertise of Eurostat and the EU NSIs and transfer this to the reality of the Mercosur statistical offices.

Methodology studies on topics of common interest to the countries were also discussed. The topics chosen were:

- quality indicator systems, as a basis for total quality planning and management;
- compiling macroeconomic indicators;
- harmonising consumer price indices;
- survey on technology innovation in companies;
- collecting statistical information for the production of a statistical digest.

Finally, five national sub-projects were presented, on topics of interest to the senior statistical authority of each country. They were:

- integrated system of regional statistics (Argentina);
- statistics on tourist facilities (Brazil);
- index of producer prices: manufacturing, farming and construction sectors (Chile);
- industrial sector statistics (Paraguay);
- service sector statistics (Uruguay).



Photo: Aurora Ortega Sanchez

Strengths and windows of opportunities

A second phase of cooperation between the EU and Mercosur has recently begun. It is, therefore, a good moment to evaluate the main results of the cooperation project for the region.

The cooperation has proved valuable in many areas.

Firstly, it created a network of experts, which continues to exist even though the agreement has ended. It is an important and ongoing body for consultations between the various national statistical offices, contributing very positively to interchanges of experience and projects, updating of methodologies, technical assistance, etc. This framework of interpersonal relations, based on knowledge, professional respect and mutual trust, facilitates statistical work in the region. For many of the working groups, the project was the first chance for them to engage in joint activities aimed at regional statistical harmonisation.

The project also resulted in a qualitative leap in the process of statistical harmonisation, both from the point of view of methodological accounting and from the point of view of obtaining harmonised data. It helped to create an awareness of the need within Mercosur for a body with a common vision role in order to progress further in harmonising, systematising and disseminating Mercosur statistics. The need for new regional statistics has also been identified to smooth the regional integration.

A number of framework agreements for statistical cooperation have been signed by the Directors of Mercosur and Chile's NSIs. In addition, a pluri-annual statistical programme

for Mercosur and Chile, covering the period 2003–07 was created. These examples of formalisation demonstrate the absence of previous agreements between all the countries in the bloc.

A web page with statistical information, showing the advances and successes achieved during the project, was created. A statistical compendium disseminating the results achieved by the working groups was also published. This publication reveals the most serious statistical problems in the areas of harmonisation and comparability and points the way to the harmonisation priorities.

In brief, the cooperation project also strengthened statistical integration between the Mercosur countries. It gave the countries of the region access to the experience of statistical harmonisation acquired in Europe through the EU NSI network, as well as to the experience of the EU's statistical institutes in the creation, adaptation and application of EU and international methodologies.

Special mention should also be made of the advances made on harmonisation of consumer price indexes which resulted in standardisation of 90 % of the consumer shopping baskets.

Reference should also be made to the important work done in the field of social statistics, notably in the areas of employment and education. This led not only to the drafting of harmonised methodology documents, but also to the production of harmonised indicators derived from the series available in each of the countries.

A long way

Given the wide scope of the project, it must be said that the objective of harmonising statistical indicators between the EU, Mercosur and Chile within the timeframe of the agreement was extremely ambitious, and as such only partially achieved. Progress towards harmonisation was achieved in some fields, and in all fields common methodologies for compiling statistics were established, especially between the Mercosur countries and Chile. It cannot be said, however, that satisfactory levels of harmonisation in relation to the statistics produced by the EU have been achieved.

While information networks and databases may have been created, it is vital to establish formal continuity in exchanges and technical operations in order to ensure the production of harmonised data series. Given the limited budgets available to some of the countries in the bloc, specific funding is required in order to compile statistical series and guarantee the maintenance and updating of these databases.

Although provided for in the agreement, it was not possible to formalise the creation of a technical group at the Mercosur level, which would imply recognition of a permanent forum for the establishment of statistical policies associated with decision-making and standardisation of the official statistics and methodologies applied.



The EU–Mercosur statistical cooperation project resulted in a qualitative leap in the process of statistical harmonisation, both from the point of view of methodological accounting and from the point of view of obtaining harmonised data.
Photo: Aurora Ortega Sanchez

groups addressing other issues of major significance in the bloc, such as income distribution, the labour market, the informal economy, poverty, the use of administrative registers kept for statistical purposes with a view to reducing the cost of statistical operations, etc.

However, it should be underlined that the strong points far outweighed the

weak points, insofar as successes were achieved which could never have been achieved outside the project.

By Ana Maria Edwin, Director of Statistical Cooperation Project EC–Mercosur, National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (Indec) of Argentina.

Experience has shown that both the Steering Committee and the working group composed of the statistical directors should have produced precise specifications regarding the mandates and work plans of the individual working groups, so as to obtain the best results. This was the case with the mandates of the Social Statistics Group, the National Accounts Group and the Social Services Group. The thematic areas were too wide-ranging, resulting in unprofitable discussions during the first and sometimes even the second meetings of the groups.

Similarly, before starting the activities the responsibilities of international third bodies should have been identified. By virtue of their nature and their presence in Latin America, they should have been consulted at the outset to avoid duplication of effort and promote synergies.

Finally, given the Latin American social context, it would have been advisable to involve in the project additional

Mercosur covers a wide variety of policy areas ranging from the creation of a regional common market and a full macroeconomic coordination, to a harmonisation of social policies, joint political initiatives, military cooperation and regional guarantees for the preservation of democracy and respect of human rights. Mercosur also represents the fourth largest economic group in the world after the EU, Nafta and Japan and has a total GDP of USD 1 100 billion and a population of 210 million.

For further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/mercotur/rsp/index.htm

Successful regional integration in southern and eastern Africa



Photo: M-Á Horcajada

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) is a regional integration arrangement consisting of 20 Member States. These are Angola, Burundi, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This diverse group of countries forms a regional market of 375 million people with a combined GDP of over USD 250 billion.

Since 1993, the EU and Comesa have cooperated in the field of statistics in order to support the regional integration of Comesa Member States.

The treaty establishing Comesa as a regional integration arrangement provides a basis for understanding the vision and direction of integration in all areas of interest to the Member States. Statistical cooperation is guided by Articles 139 and 140 in this treaty. The treaty mentions the following as the motivation for cooperation in the statistical domain:

'The Member States undertake to cooperate in providing information that would enable them to review the functioning and development of the common market and move efficiently in the implementation of the provisions of this Treaty.'

Cooperation between the EU and Comesa

EU-Comesa statistical cooperation began in 1993 under the European Development Fund (EDF 6). This cooperation was implemented under a project called Comesa Asycuda-Eurotrace regional project. The principal objectives of the regional project were to:

- sustain existing Asycuda and Eurotrace (software to support the compilation and dissemination of customs and external trade data) projects by providing integrated system support and back-up services to Member States;
- assist in the implementation of new projects on request;
- organise regional training and share regional implementation experience;
- build capacity at both national and regional levels.

At the end of the project in December 1999, both Asycuda and Eurotrace had been installed in 12 Member States. The Eurotrace system had also been installed in five other Member States and in two non-Member States, Lesotho and Mozambique.

The project implementation had a number of challenges particularly in the building of capacity in statistical offices that tended and still tends to take place concomitantly with high staff turnover.

The first phase of the project was due to end on 31 December 1997. However, an evaluation exercise carried out concluded that there was need for a successor project and a bridging finance from January to December 1998 and later to June 1999 was secured to prepare the successor project. At a workshop held in February 1998, in Lusaka, the objective of the new project was defined as 'facilitation of implementation of national customs systems combined with accurate, timely, complete and comparable production and dissemination of external trade statistics at national and regional level'. The successor project was called the regional harmonisation of customs and trade statistics systems (RH-CTSS) project and was funded under the EDF eighth envelope. This project had 13 result areas, including three that dealt with statistics.

- Result 1: External trade statistics are disseminated in time the Comesa regional centre.
- Result 2: Statistical data on external trade produced by Comesa Member States are mutually comparable. The external trade statistics are produced according to harmonised nomenclatures and common statistical rules.
- Result 3: Coordination between customs, NSIs, the Comesa regional centre and other stakeholders has been established and is effective.

The project set about activating these goals by designing work programmes that were country-driven. Hence one of its key successes was the establishment of a coordination mechanism in each country in order to foster a spirit of ownership of Comesa programmes. First on data dissemination, the project introduced the service level agreements between statistical offices and customs offices as well as agreements between the statistical offices and the Comesa regional centre. The country coordination mechanism also covered the aspects of organisation of user-producer workshops in each country. Eurostat played an advisory role through its partici-



Since 1993, the EU and Comesa have cooperated in the field of statistics in order to support the regional integration of Comesa Member States, a market of 375 million people. Photo of Banna woman in Ethiopia. Photo: Miguel- Ángel Horcajada

pation in the Steering Committee meetings and directors of statistics meetings throughout the project.

Compared to the initial status, dissemination performance of Comesa countries had improved from a time-lag of over a year to a lag of three months for many countries. Failure to achieve this result for some countries was largely due to a lack of customs modernisation (Swaziland, Djibouti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance). Modernisation of customs offices was a key success factor in achieving timely dissemination of merchandise trade statistics. At the regional level, merchandise trade statistics reports were, and continue to be, produced annually.

Further, the result areas covered the issue of harmonisation. Harmonisation of product nomenclatures was largely dependent on customs modernisation as well. Most countries that had Asyuda and non-Asyuda systems adopted World Customs Organisation recommendations and were able to produce harmonised statistics. Furthermore, the design of the Eurotrace systems enabled users to produce merchandise trade statistics using UN recommendations such as a compilation using the general trade system.

The RHCTSS project did subsume some of the roles of the predecessor project as far as capacity building in the Eurotrace system and its next version, the New Eurotrace Windows. Further capacity building exercises in concepts and methodology of merchandise trade statistics were undertaken in conjunction with the United Nations Statistical Division. Additional support to statistical offices was given through the provision of equipment.

Regional integration support project

Under the EDF 9, the European Union and Comesa signed a contribution agreement with a number of result areas. One of these results is the improvement and harmonisation of statistics. Given the broad sweep of this result area, the Comesa Secretariat is drawing up a statistical strategy for the support of Member States in accordance to the treaty provisions. The

design of this statistical strategy follows the key Comesa integration programmes in trade policy, investment and infrastructure development. This reinforces the recommendations of the Directors of Statistics Meeting on the core statistical areas for the Comesa Secretariat to adopt. A number of intervention areas have been identified as priority areas.

Statistical cooperation between Comesa and the African Development Bank

In 2005, the African Development Bank signed a memorandum of understanding with the Comesa Secretariat for the latter to coordinate the International Comparison Programme in nine Comesa Member States. The programme is developed as a capacity building programme for the Comesa Secretariat to undertake and sustain ICP surveys in the future. Furthermore, the programme also involves work on national accounts as well as collaborating in the development of national strategies for the development of statistics.

A successful evaluation of EU-Comesa statistical cooperation

This evaluation, insofar as enhancing the work of the Comesa integration programme is concerned, has been successful. The provision and availability of merchandise trade statistics for use in trade policy analysis has been cardinal in the Comesa Secretariat's work programmes. This need further highlighted the needs of Comesa to develop other statistical domains which are necessary for monitoring and analysing its integration. The cooperation model, particularly at the Comesa Secretariat level, will have to find ways continually of addressing the 'sustainability issue' in Member States. This, above all else, is where the success of the cooperation model is best measured. But it needs to be emphasised that the statistical office and host country governments are the major determinants of solutions to the 'sustainability issues'. Through our cooperation with the African Development Bank, there is an initiative aimed at designing a national strategy for statistical development in member countries and this to a large extent is aimed at addressing key issues in the statistical system including, inter alia, the 'sustainability'.

Further cooperation between Comesa and all cooperating partners is being coordinated so as to achieve synergies.

By Themba Munalula, Senior Statistician, Comesa.

For further information:
www.comesa.int

Croatia: from independent State to active player in international cooperation

When Croatia became an independent country in 1991, it was necessary to establish a national statistical office capable of providing a range of statistical indicators for the governmental decision-making process, for the public administration, business and citizens as well as for use in research and by academics. Over a period of more than 10 years the office was modernised, but it soon became clear that international cooperation was essential.

Before independence, Croatia had a regional statistical office carrying out a limited range of tasks, with limited experience and responsibilities. Administrative capacities were insufficient for the new challenges of providing the market-oriented society with the necessary official statistics, while existing experience, knowledge and skills had to be significantly upgraded. It was a tremendous task to develop a national statistical system starting from such a position.

Cooperation with international partners

Gradually, organisational structures were upgraded and built, experiences widened, knowledge and skills developed. Soon, it became obvious that, if the development process was to be speeded up, it was necessary to participate in international statistical cooperation.

In the 1990s, the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia (CBS) went through an intensive period of adoption of SNA 93 and ESA 95 standards, introduction of major international classifications and household surveys and of general adjustment of all statistical areas to the requirements set by the market economy and democratic society. Although the majority of work was carried out without external technical assistance, statistical cooperation played an important role.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, actively supported the development of Quarterly GDP. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) provided assistance in a number of different statistical areas, including annual GDP development and the OECD provided continuous assistance in the development of purchasing power parities. As a consequence, efforts in adopting SNA 93 and ESA 95 were supported in crucial areas, providing the necessary transfer of knowledge to CBS staff and assistance in establishing relevant methodological foundations.

In general, this period was marked by support in the assessment of different statistical areas in CBS and by providing



Cartoon: Milan Lekic

guidance in the process of gradual harmonisation with the statistical *acquis*. The US Bureau of Labour Statistics was one of the first organisations to provide transfer of 'know-how' to CBS and the World Bank has also continuously supported CBS development.

Increasing relations with the EU

After 2000, CBS experienced the second phase in statistical cooperation, marked by increasing relations with Eurostat and several EU Member States. Planning of the Cards programmes, financed by the European Union, started in 2001, and their implementation started in 2002.

Currently, CBS participates in planning activities for the Phare programme. So far, several projects have been developed, mostly based on twinning, in cooperation with statistical offices from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as the OECD. Bilateral coopera-



'The greatest advantage of statistical cooperation is its variety, the possibility to combine different types of assistance, reflecting different needs, environments and peculiarities of the statistical areas in question', writes Robert Knezevic.

Photo of Dubrovnik in Croatia. Photo: Diana Ivan

tion with Germany started in 2001 and lasted until 2004. Cooperation with Sweden started in 2002 and continues, while cooperation with France began in 2005 and continues, too. In this period, CBS established cooperation with statistical offices in Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro.

On the right track for 'win-win' results

It is very important to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of statistical cooperation, because only then can it be used as an appropriate developing tool. There is always the hope of achieving the expected results and a successful outcome of a cooperation activity, while at the same time there is an underlying uncertainty regarding possible failure. It is certainly an advantage to have a reliable partner, with sufficient experience, relevant knowledge and skills, which can be transferred to CBS. Still, it can be perceived as crossing an uncharted area, requiring special concentration and attention.

CBS is working intensively to adjust the existing statistics and developing new ones, which demands an additional engagement of the staff and other resources. An important issue in this respect is the impossibility of delaying or postponing the regular production of statistics, while working simultaneously on its further development with the same personnel available for both tasks. As a consequence, it is necessary to plan cooperation activities carefully for limited and distinct periods, allowing for regular work to be done by the CBS staff involved. The majority of NSIs have a very similar situation in this respect, whether beneficiaries or donors.

The greatest advantage of statistical cooperation is its variety, the possibility to combine different types of assistance, reflecting different needs, environments and peculiarities of the statistical areas in question. Sometimes it is quite a challenge to organise cooperation quickly in a specific area. When CBS needs assistance urgently, sometimes it is not possible to find available cooperation instruments, while, on the other hand, it has happened that CBS had insufficient resources to make use of kind offers of assistance from other NSIs. It requires a lot of effort and goodwill on both sides to find the best solution.

It seems that bilateral cooperation provides the most flexible type of assistance in the initial evaluation of certain statistics and on drafting the preliminary strategic steps. An excellent example of such assistance is the meta-database development project with Statistics Sweden, which allowed for necessary but unforeseen changes in the project. Communicating information to Eurostat and other European Commission partners on activities in bilateral cooperation proved to be essential in establishing the second phase of cooperation, which draws larger financing, possible only through the European Commission, through Cards and Phare programmes. Such an approach enables achievement of results more quickly and in a more coherent and comprehensive manner. Large-scale activities like the development of the Business Register, as a long-term and expensive activity is being assisted through several large Cards- and Phare-funded programmes.

A world of possibilities

It is a fact that CBS has benefited from statistical cooperation, and that further activities of this kind are to be expected. It was especially useful to cooperate in some selected areas, requiring smaller CBS resources. There are numerous examples: for instance, IMF and DFID-supported development of annual and quarterly GDP, whose importance to a wide range of users does not require additional elaboration. A World Bank loan was used to develop the consumer price index, in line with the *acquis*, again as one of crucial macroeconomic indicators. Projects financed from pre-accession funds are providing the development of the regional GDP, and the Business Register, with Denmark as a partner. The Agricultural Census 2003 was methodologically prepared in cooperation with consultants from Germany. Cooperation with Statistics Sweden enabled the development of a very advanced model of the macro-databases and central meta-data repository, as a technological foundation for high-level integration and standardisation of CBS operations. OECD support to the purchasing power parity project resulted in regular CBS production. These examples present a combination of different types of cooperation, including bilateral cooperation with some countries, international organisations and EU pre-accession programmes.

At this moment, international statistical cooperation plays an important role for CBS. It is expected that pre-accession programmes, by their sheer size, will engage the majority of CBS resources and that bilateral cooperation will decrease. It is a natural thing, due to the requirements of the accession process. It is possible that even the nature of these pro-



International statistical cooperation plays an important role for the CBS. However, it is expected that the pre-accession programmes will engage the majority of the office's resources and that bilateral cooperation will decrease.

Photo of Rovinj in Croatia. Photo: Baudouin Quennery

grammes will shift weight from twinning projects to service contracts, as was the case in other countries.

Accession will certainly bring new challenges in taking an active role and responsibility for joint development of the European statistical system (ESS). It is advantageous both for CBS and the ESS that numerous contacts and established relations with other NSIs will continue, enabling faster introduction into the mainstream of development activities. Simultaneously, CBS should continue building on well-established cooperation with neighbouring countries in south-east Europe. It would be a loss for all if similarity in languages, some common statistical roots and development paths were not used for the common good.

By Robert Knezevic, Head of Director-General's Office of International Relations, Central Bureau of Statistics of Croatia.

For further information:
www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm

Romania: the will to integrate into the European statistical system

Daniela Stefanescu, Director of European Integration and International Cooperation, Vergil Voineagu, President of Statistics Romania, and Tatiana Barsanescu, Deputy Director of European Integration and International Cooperation in Statistics Romania.

The National Institute of Statistics of Romania is dedicated to the full integration of Romanian statistics into the European statistical system and the related adaptation of the Romanian statistical system. Romanian statistics undergo continued improvements in order to achieve strategies, know-how and common approaches with the Member States of the European Union and the candidate countries.



The Romanian statistical system has gone through three development stages:

- the 'what to do?' period covering the years 1990–94, when the basic statistical knowledge (know-how) was acquired, the strategy, the programmes and the priorities were established and the statistical infrastructure started to be built at central and local level;
- the 'how to do?' period during 1994–99, when the statistical system was restructured under the Phare programmes;
- the period from 2000 up to the present, representing the statistical harmonisation stage and, from 1997, the grad-

ual integration of Romanian statistics into the European statistical system.

An active player on the scene of international technical cooperation

The National Institute of Statistics has already established a tradition in the domain of international technical cooperation. Limited at first to developing bilateral cooper-

ation relations in the field of statistics (particularly with the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies — Insee), this activity has expanded year after year, mainly since 1991. Today, the technical cooperation of NIS is an integral part of a system of bilateral and multilateral relations with all the general stakeholders involved (providers, producers and users of statistical data) making up the comprehensive statistical system. Since 1991, the National Institute of Statistics has managed complex and difficult programmes: Phare national programmes on the one hand and Phare multi-beneficiary (horizontal) programmes, on the other. Such programmes were, and continue to be, intended to sustain the major objective assumed by Romanian statistics, namely integration into the European statistical system (ESS).

The cooperation actions of Romanian statistics evolved over time to include the strengthening of bilateral cooperation relations with a number of countries (INE-Portugal, NSS-Greece, Istat-Italy, Destatis-Germany, INE-Spain, in addition to Insee-France, etc.). Moreover, the request for assistance from national statistical offices generated a positive reaction from the Romanian statistical experts, who took over the obligation to provide support to the statistical development of various countries based on the experience acquired. Such requests were also understood as a confirmation of the state-of-the-art of Romanian statistics and of its success in coordinating statistical activities based on the scientific and technical potential achieved. Let us remember the presence of Romanian statisticians in the large-scale operation organised by FAO to establish the concepts of the world programme for the Agricultural Census — 2010, in organising the Population and Dwelling Census in Kosovo, in defining the statistical cooperation strategy for the western Balkan countries, etc. The list of examples could continue. Romanian statisticians are currently working for renowned statistical offices of multinational and international organisations such as Eurostat, the IMF and the FAO.

In December 2000, the accession-related negotiations for the chapter 'Statistics' were closed. No derogation and no transition period was requested and Romanian statisticians concentrated their efforts on implementing the statistical *acquis* until accession.

Implementing the statistical *acquis*

Major progress was achieved in several statistical fields such as:

- adoption of EU classifications and nomenclatures;
- compilation of a business register;

- implementation of the population and dwelling census and of the general census of agriculture;
- availability of the demographic and social statistical data;
- availability of statistical data on businesses including the structural and short-term indicators;
- availability of monetary statistics data;
- adoption of the European System of Accounts (ESA 95);
- full set of harmonised price indices and purchasing power indices;
- harmonised data on foreign trade, Extrastat;
- availability of agricultural data;
- availability of most of the structural indicators.

As regards the horizontal elements of the statistical system, the following results were obtained:

- data dissemination is well organised and accessible to the public;
- links between the official statistics and academic statistics were established.

In the progress report of the European Commission on Chapter 12 'Statistics', the conclusions were the following: 'Romania complies with the commitments and requirements provided in the accession negotiations relative to the statistical field and is expected to be in the position of implementing the *acquis communautaire* from the accession date. Romania should continue to pay attention to the methodological development, quality improvement and data completeness in fields like national accounts, business statistics and agriculture statistics.'

Objectives of the international cooperation strategy, 2006–08

The major objectives for the period 2006–08 are sustainability, the quality of statistics and the coordination of the statistical system. These objectives may be detailed as follows:

- NIS integration in the European statistical system;
- support in setting up a continued capacity of the statistical system, including the adoption of the total quality approach;
- NIS development as the main co-coordinator of the national statistical system;
- turning statistics into a better instrument for the decision-makers;
- production of harmonised statistics in compliance with the new *acquis*;
- Romanian statistics should be able to cope with the new phenomena;
- achievement and preservation of the total conform-



Today, the technical cooperation of NIS is an integral part of a system of bilateral and multilateral relations with all the general stakeholders involved in making up the comprehensive statistical system.
Photo of Sighisoara in Romania.
Photo: EPA / Paul Buciuta

sion of the European statistical system and that of the NIS is to provide high-quality information and a systematic management of quality that is necessary to continuously identify and implement improvements.

Statistical quality also includes elements such as statistical data relevance, accuracy of estimates, data accessibility, truthfulness, comparability, coherence and completeness.

The management of quality also covers strategic planning, the decision-making process, management of

ity with the *acquis communautaire* in the statistical field including its dynamics.

Statistical quality: an obligation

Statistics perform several functions besides the production and dissemination of the statistical data. Quality statistics imply a strictly scientific approach and the practising of suitable methodologies understood by the users and recognised by society. Other directions for development are the preservation of the observation units' confidentiality and the independence of the statistical system from political interventions. To achieve this, the management and planning of the statistical system have to be strengthened.

Another statistical dimension is concerned with quality, which guarantees its legitimacy abroad and domestically. The mis-

human resources, the increase in user satisfaction, as well as the computation of indicators measuring NIS performance.

One of the envisaged objectives is the improvement of certain statistical factors, such as total quality management, leading to the creation of a sustainable statistical capacity.

Naturally, our strategy, planning and best intentions are not enough. Fortunately, the National Institute of Statistics has a professional staff dedicated and committed to the desiderata of modern statistics, whose performances meet the highest international and European quality standards.

By Daniela Stefanescu, Director of European Integration and International Cooperation, and Tatiana Barsanescu, Deputy Director of European Integration and International Cooperation, National Institute of Statistics of Romania.

International cooperation speeds up the development of Tunisian statistics



Dr Ben Fekih, Director-General of the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia sitting between Taha Kshib, in charge of the Direction of Standards, Statistical Coordination and International Cooperation NSI Tunisia and Francisco Fernández Fernández, Eurostat.

The strategy of economic and social development adopted by Tunisia has led it towards a liberalisation of the economy and an opening to the outside, especially to the Euro-Med area. The country thus signed an association agreement with the European Union in 1995 and has been involved in the Barcelona Process for Europe and the Mediterranean since its inception.

Tunisian statistics have matched these changes by opening to the outside and adopting international cooperation as an important means to speed up its internal development and to strengthen relations with various external partners. The aim is to boost the capacity of the country's statistical structures through training and exchanges of experience and skills and by keeping up with developments in statistical methods and techniques. Cooperation of this kind makes it easier to adapt to international standards in statistical concepts, classifications, methods and practices.

Such actions cannot fail to improve the national statistical system and to have an effect on the quality of the statistical information which is produced and its comparability with international data, thereby making it easier to exchange and understand such information.

Sustained cooperation especially at bilateral level

Since it was set up in 1969, the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia has endeavoured to forge relations for statistical co-

The statistical system in Tunisia has experienced major developments in recent years to ensure its necessary adaptation to changes in the Tunisian economy and society. A reform of the system made it possible in 1999 to introduce a new statistical law which defined the tasks and components of the system, together with the principles needed to govern statistical work. These principles are inspired by those adopted by the UN Statistical Commission. The use of international standards and international cooperation are regarded as essential for the development of statistical activities in the country.



Photo: Bettina Knauth

operation with its European counterparts and those in Africa, especially with its North African and Arab neighbours.

Bilateral cooperation was, for a long time, the main thrust of the National Statistical Institute's approach, especially in the form of regular and close cooperation with the French Statistical Institute, Insee. This cooperation has been marked over the years by the training of several generations of Tunisian statisticians in institutes in France. In addition, a major development since the 1980s has been the introduction of annual and multiannual cooperation programmes which have helped to give shape to major projects, such as the introduc-



Cooperation work with international bodies has not been restricted to the NSI and has benefited various statistical sectors of ministries and public bodies, such as agricultural statistics, education statistics and monetary and financial statistics.

Photo: Bettina Knauth

tion of a system of national accounts, the creation of tools for statistical coordination (business register, nomenclatures, etc) and the development of statistics in various areas of activity.

Other arrangements with international bodies in the last 10 years have allowed the NSI to increase its skills in a number of areas. For example, a cooperation programme funded by the World Bank made it easier to introduce a national strategy for statistical development in line with Paris21 recommendations. Similarly, by subscribing to the International Monetary Fund's special standard for data dissemination, Tunisia was able to improve the production and dissemination of statistical information in certain priority areas, such as employment and quarterly national accounts.

The cooperation work which has been undertaken over many years has not been restricted to the NSI and has affected various statistical sectors which come under a variety of ministries and public bodies, such as agricultural statistics, education statistics and monetary and financial statistics.

In recent years the NSI has also welcomed statisticians from certain African and Arab institutes on study visits to learn

about Tunisia's experiences in various statistical fields, especially the creation and coordination of a statistical development strategy, population censuses, consumption surveys, prices and national accounts. This type of exchange of experience and expertise and south-south cooperation should be encouraged and continued as a natural extension to the traditional cooperation between statistical institutes in advanced countries and their counterparts in the developing world. Cooperation of this type can be triangular in nature, by bringing together statistical bodies at various levels of development.

New prospects through Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation

The regional cooperation in statistics, which has emerged since 1995 in the wake of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, has led to new prospects for international cooperation and for the development of Mediterranean statistical systems. The view of the Mediterranean countries is that this

trend should lead to an alignment of their statistical set-ups with Europe's statistical system, thereby fostering the development of reliable national statistical systems.

The features of the Medstat programme are its regional nature and the geographic scope of its involvement. The resources made available have been a major factor in carrying out the project. Such resources have not always been available in connection with other international cooperation activities. Overall, participation in the programme has been beneficial for Tunisia's National Statistical Institute, especially through wider contacts with new European and Mediterranean countries and by the improvement and impetus given to statistical activities in some areas.

The programme objectives, which are aimed at harmonising concepts and methods with European standards, boosting the exchange of information among the countries involved and developing national statistical systems, are in line with the expectations of the Mediterranean statistical institutes.

The areas covered by the programme have varying priorities for each of the partner countries. They nevertheless represent a basis for joint regional action in line with the priorities of the Barcelona Agreement. The actions undertaken in each of the programme's sub-projects have met with unequal progress because of the particular features and the circumstances affecting the implementation of each sub-programme.

Benefits of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

Training actions have been an important component of the programme and have allowed many Tunisian statisticians to take part in seminars, to attend specialist sessions in their particular field and to get to know their European and Mediterranean counterparts.

Some sub-programmes have resulted in considerable progress, especially in the case of environmental statistics. A new unit has been created within the NSI to carry out regular statistical work on collecting and managing environmental information and bringing it in line with European standards. The dissemination of this information in the country's statistical yearbook and in two national compendiums on environmental statistics compiled as part of the project has made it possible to give a higher profile to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in this particular area and in the statistical field generally.

There has been a lot of activity in other sectoral sub-programmes, such as external trade, transport and tourism. Data have been collected in these areas, harmonised with

European standards and exchanged with Eurostat. Improvements have been made in the production, dissemination and quality of these statistics in spite of the difficulties encountered, especially in connection with the adoption of software programmes, such as Eurotrace for external trade and Eretes for national accounts.

In addition, despite difficulties in implementing its recommendations, the sub-programme on international migration prompted the NSI to incorporate this topic in the 2004 10-yearly census of the population and in the annual population and employment surveys. This, in turn, enabled a calculation of migration balances and adjustment of the population estimates based on local registry statistics.

The Medstat I programme was the springboard for a great deal of activity by the various partners and got off to a successful start, albeit only in part. The long-term effect of the programme's actions can be assured only through continuity over time, but this has been jeopardised by the temporary halt in cooperation activities until the start-up of the Medstat II programme.

Consolidating and extending the scope of action

The second stage of the Medstat programme which started in January 2006 is intended to build on what was achieved during the first stage and to continue the efforts towards harmonisation and collection, compiling data bases and the work of dissemination. Extending the scope of the programme to other areas, such as agriculture, energy and social statistics is likely to offer more opportunities to develop statistics in these areas. In spite of the regional extent of the programme and in the light of past experience, however, by taking better account of national circumstances when defining actions there is likely to be more chance of providing a better response to the expectations and needs of the partner countries, and especially of those in the Mediterranean region.

By providing a variety of openings to the outside, Tunisia has been encouraged to make social and economic information more easily available and to guarantee the quality of such information so that it complies with international standards and can be compared with the data of its partner countries. International cooperation, whether bilateral or multilateral, is a powerful factor in achieving this objective and in helping to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the national statistical system.

By Dr Ben Fekih, Director-General of the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia.

Medstat: the Jordanian experience

In the field of south–south cooperation, Medstat I contributed to the enhancement of cooperation among the Mediterranean partnership countries regarding data exchange, methodologies implemented and technologies used.

As part of the overall policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Department of Statistics (DoS) has endeavoured to enhance cooperation with regional and international statistical offices, including Eurostat, within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership through the first phase of the Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation programme Medstat. The launching in 2006 of the second phase, Medstat II, offers an opportunity to raise a number of important issues.



The Department of Statistics (DoS) has the mandate to collect, compile, store, analyse and disseminate official statistics, including the findings of censuses and surveys conducted in the demographic, economic, agricultural, environmental and cultural domains. The DoS is also required to produce data that might be needed to cover other conditions of society as well, outlining concerns and circumstances and complying with definitions, classifications, standards, methodologies and technologies internationally employed.

Positive impact of Medstat I

In this context, during the programme life, Medstat I contributed significantly to the enhancement of the statistical capacity building process at the DoS. The successful implementation of the different projects has produced a wide range of positive developments related to the thematic priority sectors of migration, environment, transport, national accounts, tourism or external trade statistics.

In general, Medstat I has contributed significantly to improving the way the activities of the DoS are conducted, by bringing in methodologies, definitions and classifications in agreement with international or European standards, in line with established practice by the European statistical offices.

In the field of data dissemination and data exchange, special software packages, such as Stadium-Statel, have been made available and installed in the DoS for data exchange with Eurostat. Advanced PCs and printers were also provided to the DoS. In addition, the DoS, as well as the other Mediterranean countries, has been provided with a standard database on environment and transport indicators. Efforts invested in that area have paid back since the first national compendium on environmental data was developed under the environment component of the second phase of Medstat, MED Environment 2, a project conducted by Plan Bleu, one of the regional activity centres of the Mediterranean action plan.

Medstat I also contributed to upgrading the statistical capabilities of DoS staff through participation in training courses, particularly on environment statistics. Our trainers, who participated in 'training for trainers' courses, generated a wider impact process since they conducted local courses on descriptive statistics for DoS staff and participants from other governmental data producers for knowledge transfer purposes.

The training courses provided by Medstat I were intensive in terms of content covered. The only drawback was the choice of training language, either English or French, which resulted in a reduced opportunity for participation in some Arabic speaking countries, where foreign languages are less spoken.

In the field of south-south cooperation, Medstat I contributed to a great extent to the enhancement of cooperation among the 12, at that time, Mediterranean countries regarding data exchange, methodologies implemented and technologies used.

Challenges for Medstat II

Given the regional dimension of the Medstat I programme, it was mandated to deal with all the Mediterranean countries in terms of technical statistical cooperation assimilating partner countries' at the same level, somewhat reducing the possibility to take into consideration the existence of strong specificities among them.

However, some weaknesses in different areas have been observed. For instance, in the case of Jordan, specific assistance on areas such as water accounts, household solids waste, environmental health and the specialised survey on migration would have been of added benefit to help the DoS bridge any gaps in our statistical programmes.

After the launch of the second phase of Medstat, new priority sectors were introduced. A particular emphasis was put into tailoring the technical assistance, and other support activities to the specific situation of each partner country.



Medstat I has contributed significantly to improving the way the activities of the DoS are conducted, by bringing in methodologies, definitions and classifications in agreement with international or European standards, in line with established practice by the European statistical offices. Photo: Pierre Cester



Photo: Pierre Cester

Yet, it is also my view that the new phase, Medstat II, would become more beneficial to Mediterranean partner countries, if technical assistance could be extended to certain areas such as wage indices, employment creation indicators and business condition measures.

Medstat II has the necessary ingredients to become a successful vehicle to strengthen cooperation between partner countries: the transfer of know-how through organising on-the-job training, thereby providing insight into the most valid approaches to restructuring their statistical system and manpower and also providing assistance on quality control procedures.

By Gazi Shbaikat, Director-General of the Department of Statistics of Jordan.

The Medstat programme in brief

The policy of the European Union towards the Mediterranean region is largely shaped by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Barcelona Process) established as a result of the Barcelona Conference held in 1995.

In the statistical domain, European Member States and Mediterranean partners have intensified their relations since 1996. Financed under the MEDA instrument, these relations are bundled in the regional statistical cooperation programme Medstat.

With a EUR 20 million budget, the first phase of the Medstat programme (Medstat I) was carried out between 1996 and 2003. Medstat II was launched in 2006 for a duration of three years and with a total budget of EUR 30 million.

Medstat aims at responding to the purpose of the association agreements between the EU and Mediterranean partners — most notably in the area of free trade, sustainable development as well as social development. It contributes to the supply of useful statistical information, essential for following the progress of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Its objective is to harmonise the statistical methods in line with European and international norms and standards. Furthermore, it aims at improving the compatibility of data in the partner countries as well as their comparability with statistical data from European Member States.

Moreover, Medstat aims at enhancing the quality of services offered to the users by the national statistical institutes and their partner organisations involved in the production of statistics. Delivering timely, reliable, relevant and high-quality data is important for political decision-making and good governance.

From December 1996 until March 2003, Medstat I covered several statistical sectors. A new project, Medstat-Env II which focused on the environment sector, was carried out between 2003 and 2006.

Since January 2006, Medstat II has been committed to continuing the efforts already undertaken, by organising training courses and by providing the technical means to the information systems of the national statistical institutes and of the other institutions involved in the production of statistics in Mediterranean partner countries.

Special attention is paid to the coherence of data, their harmonisation and dissemination in the following nine statistical sectors: trade of goods and services, transport, migration, tourism, environment, national accounts, social statistics, energy and agriculture.

The programme currently includes 10 Mediterranean partner countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The West African Economic and Monetary Union: a success story

'The major cooperation partners consider that European Community support to WAEMU statistics has generated very positive results and served as an example for projects in other regions', writes Jürgen Heimann.
Photo: Christine Ardillac

The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) was founded in 1994 in response to the devaluation of the common currency, with the goal of developing a competitive common market based on the free flow of persons, goods, services, and capital. Member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The European Community has supported WAEMU from the start. The support for statistics has focused on satisfying needs from the WAEMU countries themselves, as well as economic agents.



Given the difficult environment in which African, Caribbean and Pacific countries' (ACP) statistical cooperation projects operate, it is hard to find one example that satisfies all the criteria of a successful development project, i.e. one that achieves high scores in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Eurostat's international cooperation focuses on regional statistical programmes, which are generally more complex and more difficult to manage than national projects, as many more partners are involved. European Community (EC) support for statistics is provided predominantly within larger aid programmes. At regional levels these aid programmes focus on regional economic integration and trade development. They are based on the region's own medium and long-term development objectives and strategies. The statistical activities supported by EC funds are strongly related to regional integration agendas and their time horizons.

EC support to WAEMU statistics has been chosen as a case study because the major cooperation partners consider that this assistance generated very positive results and served as an example for projects in other regions.

Building a successful regional statistical system

Since the foundation of WAEMU, the European Community has supported this new sub-regional organisation to strengthen regional economic integration and to define and conduct regional sectoral policies (e.g. transport, food security etc.). The major part of the support for establishing harmonised regional statistics was provided within regional integration support programmes called PARI 1 and PARI 2. These programmes were funded by the seventh and eighth European Development Fund (EDF). In all, about USD



Soumaïla Cisse, President of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, is from Mali.

11 million were spent from regional EC funds on statistics. This includes financing surveys in the Member States to comply with the regional information requirements.

The main objective of the multiple activities in the statistical domain was to satisfy the needs arising from the establishment of a multilateral surveillance mechanism for the WAEMU countries, as well as to satisfy the basic information needs of economic agents. The statistical domains concerned were: consumer prices (including household budget surveys), national accounts (GDP), the informal sector, industrial production, external trade, short-term indicators and a competitiveness database.

The work consisted of harmonisation activities, the development and/or implementation of statistical software (e.g. Chapo for consumer prices, Eretes for national accounts, Eurotrace for external trade), conducting statistical surveys and the improvement of the statistical capacities of the WAEMU Commission and of the national statistical systems through staff training and hardware and office equipment provision. There was no single large programme but several successive projects were undertaken between 1994 and today which followed the EDF programming cycle. Priority was initially given to the production of harmonised consumer price indices (HCPIs); work had already started by 1994. The support programme for regional statistics, Par-

stat, took over in 1997 and extended the work to the above areas. The last phase, completed at the end of 2005 under PARI 2, was dedicated mainly to consolidating the results obtained under the Parstat project. Globally the statistical projects achieved their goals, despite the many difficulties of an administrative nature. The involvement of Afristat, which provided high quality services within these projects, was a major advantage.

The main achievements are as follows.

- Survey on household expenditure in all WAEMU capital cities in 1996 (Guinea Bissau in 2001); publication of the survey results.
- HCPI: monthly production and dissemination of HCPI by all WAEMU countries and by the regional organisation: e.g. the June 2006 figures were published in a bulletin in July 2006 and are available on the WAEMU Commission website (see Table 1). These include the development and maintenance of Chapo, work on quality improvements of HCPI and preparation of an update of the weighting schemes.
- National accounts/GDP: improved comparability of GDP figures (see Table 2) — a regulation on the modalities to calculate GDP has been adopted with Member States producing their data accordingly. The software tool Eretes, co-owned by the European Commission (Eurostat) and France, which produces national accounts according to SNA 93, has been implemented and is in use in all WAEMU countries, except Senegal and Guinea Bissau. However, due to weaknesses in the basic data, the quality of GDP figures is still often compromised.
- Urban informal sector: surveys were conducted in 2001 and 2003 to get data on the main characteristics of the informal sector of WAEMU countries (production units, employment, income, etc). Statistics on the urban informal sector have been published at country and regional levels. They show that the estimated share of the informal

Table 1: Price indices in WAEMU countries, 1996=100 (as of October 2006)

	01/06	02/06	03/06	04/06	05/06	06/06	07/06	08/06	09/06
Benin	133.9	135.5	136.3	137.6	138.9	137.8	135.5	134.2	
Burkina Faso	125.3	124.8	123.7	124.8	128.2	127.7	129.6	129.0	
Côte d'Ivoire	132.8	133.4	133.7	134.7	135.3	136.5	136.6	136.6	135.5
Guinea Bissau	179.6	182.5	184.0	184.0	185.4	189.2	190.9	192.8	191.9
Mali	112.5	112.9	113.9	114.3	115.2	116.8	117.0	116.7	117.3
Niger	121.3	121.0	121.7	121.5	122.9	126.3	126.1	126.3	
Senegal	112.6	113.0	113.6	113.3	112.2	112.8	114.2	115.6	116.9
Togo	125.8	125.5	124.9	126.7	128.2	127.9	125.0	125.7	
UEMOA	125.5	126.0	126.3	127.0	127.6	128.4	128.6	128.8	

Source: WAEMU Commission.

Table 2: Impact of GDP harmonisation in WAEMU countries, corrections of GDP(*) in %

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Benin	5.3	1.8	5.4	3.5	4.1	4.9	4.6	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.3
Burkina Faso	10.0	9.5	11.6	11.7	10.7	10.9	10.8	11.1	12.0	11.6	11.5
Côte d'Ivoire	9.4	10.9	9.9	8.9	8.1	7.6	5.9	7.6	7.1	7.0	6.7
Bissau-Guinea	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1
Mali	3.9	12.1	18.0	12.2	7.6	10.9	8.1	9.6	4.5	12.3	8.9
Niger	1.8	2.8	3.1	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5
Senegal	4.4	7.7	8.2	7.6	5.1	4.4	5.0	7.0	5.9	4.2	5.9
Togo	9.1	10.4	7.9	7.4	5.7	5.3	5.6	5.4	5.7	5.8	5.8

(*) The impact of GDP harmonisation is always positive because of broader statistical coverage, e.g. corrections regarding imputed rents for owner-occupied dwellings and consumption of fixed capital by general government.

Source: WAEMU Commission.

sector in GDP ranges between 43 % (Côte d'Ivoire, 2002) and 76 % (Togo, 2002). The results are used to adjust the GDP figures of WAEMU countries.

- Harmonised index on industrial production (HIIP): regular production of indices according to a harmonised methodology. This has been applied in Benin, Mali, Senegal and Togo. Côte d'Ivoire is about to apply the harmonised methodology. In Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Niger, implementation has not yet started. An application package for the production of HIIP has been developed and is used at national and regional levels.
- External trade statistics and trade surveillance: the implementation of Eurotrace in all Member States (but at present not used by Côte d'Ivoire) and regular production of external trade statistics at regional levels using this software have been accomplished. Further work on harmonisation methodology is ongoing. A trade surveillance system, based on a selection of indicators has been designed and new modules have been developed which are linked to Eurotrace.
- Analysis of short-term economic development: the aim was to inform private and public sectors regularly on the economic situation at country and regional levels. All Member States, except Niger and Guinea Bissau, now produce these *bulletins de conjuncture* on a regular basis and the WAEMU Commission has started to produce an analytical note for the whole region. A standardised format is not used at the moment but there are plans to do so.
- Information system on social questions: the first steps (studies and workshops) on the creation of this information system, covering domains such as education, health, employment and gender, have been launched.
- Multiannual statistical programme: a regional statistical programme covering the period 2006–10 has been developed. The programme addresses a large number of economic and social statistics that are considered necessary for the definition, follow-up and evaluation of

WAEMU policies. The statistical activities are regrouped into four areas:

1. strengthening of convergence policy;
2. poverty and social cohesion;
3. establishment of the common market;
4. institutional strengthening.

Lessons learnt

Taking into account all the 'classic' difficulties of work in developing countries/regions, i.e. a lack of financial and qualified human resources and governance problems, the results attained appear quite impressive. However, these were not achieved through a single programme, but through a series of projects and activities conducted between 1995 and 2005.

First lesson: Be realistic regarding the time and resources necessary to manage the administrative and financial aspects of a project.

The positive results are also striking since much energy and effort (not to mention resources) had to be spent on complying with the complex administrative procedures of such development projects. The WAEMU Commission had not only to observe the EDF rules but also its own internal procedures. In many cases, more time was needed to satisfy administrative requirements than to carry out the actual statistical work.

Second lesson: Be realistic in defining the results that can be achieved in three- to five-year projects. Do not overload a project with too many domains and activities.

The above results could not have been achieved within one single project, but only through successive rounds. In fact, the projects, seen individually, were rather overambitious and overoptimistic. The absorption capacities of the beneficiaries were often overstated and projects needed several

prolongations and/or 'new' projects that incorporated what their predecessors had not achieved.

Third lesson: Make sure that the statistical project fulfils an explicit request from strong national or sub-regional user groups; this may include actions to stimulate this demand.

In addition, sustainability may be underpinned by creating legal obligations.

One of the positive elements of the WAEMU statistical cooperation is that certain activities enjoy continuing success, in particular, the HCPI. The lack of sustainability is normally one of the key problems of development aid. A major success factor was a strong demand for these statistics at political level (input for the multilateral surveillance mechanism) and therefore a continuous support from commissioners and ministers.

Fourth lesson: Establish long-term collaboration which will allow the statistical capacities of these organisations to be built up. Relying on short-term experts may be useful to gain specific results. However, the transfer of expertise and the creation of institutional knowledge need continuous support and partnership.

The WAEMU Commission, like other regional organisations, e.g. the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), has acquired a measure of technical expertise through EC support for certain statistical areas which now enables them to manage these areas with their own permanent staff. They have become the owner of these processes, even though external financial support might still be occasionally necessary. To achieve these goals is a long-lasting process.

Fifth lesson: Provide financial and technical support for integrated programming and regional/national programme implementation. Regional statistical programmes need to be agreed with the Member States, which should adapt their national programmes accordingly.

The international donor community should offer funding within the framework of regional and national programmes established by the partners instead of funding activities outside of these plans. A multiannual regional statistical programme developed and agreed with the Member States is an important instrument for coordination. To be successful, regional organisations need strongly committed Member States. There will be very limited impact if regional programmes and activities are not accompanied by appropriate actions at national level.

...and the way forward

Under the ninth EDF, a new financing agreement has been signed for 2006–13 to support regional integration in West Africa. This time, the agreement covers the Member States of both the WAEMU and the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas).

Eurostat will assist the Commission services in monitoring the statistical modules of this programme. The statistical modules will refer to the statistical programmes of WAEMU and Ecowas and will finance selected parts of these programmes. Eurostat will make use of its long experience gained in previous projects in both regions and will contribute, together with other Commission services, to the continuing of the successful creation of a regional statistical system capable of supporting West African regional integration. Eurostat will plead the case for a strong focus on data dissemination and the development of close producer/user relations. However, the major challenge will be to design the projects in such a way that the results can be sustained in an environment with very limited human and financial resources (see Table 3).

All these activities will be closely coordinated with donors from EU Member States and the international organisations.

Table 3: Resources of national statistical offices in WAEMU countries, 2006

1. Staff

	Permanent staff	Contract staff	Total staff members
Benin	59	39	98
Burkina Faso	66	18	84
Guinea Bissau	80	1	81
Côte d'Ivoire	254	6	260
Mali	177	6	183
Niger	51	5	56
Senegal	131	94	225
Togo	93	6	99

Source: Afristat.

2. Budget

The 2006 budget of the national statistical offices in WAEMU ranges between EUR 75 000 and EUR 3 800 000. These figures do not take into account funds received from the international donor community.

Source: Afristat.

By Jürgen Heimann, International Statistical Cooperation Unit, Eurostat.

Insee: a long tradition of international technical cooperation



Photo: PixelQuelle.de

Technical cooperation by Insee forms part of a system of bilateral and multilateral relations with all parties involved in the 'global statistical system'. The strategic guidelines for this cooperation are decided annually by Insee's Board of Management. This activity, which involves statistical services in ministries as well as a number of Insee services, is piloted by the International Technical Cooperation Unit. This unit is Insee's main contact point for French, EU or international ministries and bodies, which request or finance its actions.

International technical cooperation by Insee fulfils three objectives by:

- offering technical assistance to beneficiary countries in building a statistical system, which meets the methodological standards generally accepted at international level and in setting up partnerships with other NSIs;
- playing its part in France's policy of bilateral technical cooperation, in its fields of competence;

Initially limited to Africa, the technical cooperation conducted by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (Insee) has gradually shifted towards other areas of the world. From the beginning of the 1990s, it focused especially on the central and east European countries. Cooperation activities have attained substantial proportions, with over 350 expert missions and over 350 study visits in some years. The recent accession of 10 new Member States to the European Union has meant that Insee's technical cooperation can be redeployed to other regions.

- contributing to multilateral cooperation programmes, under the auspices of international organisations.

The importance of exchanges and training

A wide range of measures is used to carry out a cooperation programme. The most common forms of cooperation at the moment are missions abroad by Insee experts and visits by representatives from partner national statistical institutes. Insee also runs national and international thematic seminars, which offer the advantage of increasing Insee's activities using the same level of resources whilst developing fruitful exchanges amongst the beneficiary countries themselves.

Training is also a basic tool. Action in this area takes the form of organising training seminars and workshops. In French-speaking Africa, the technical cooperation offered by Insee comes in specific forms: support for Afristat — the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa — and statistical colleges which are tailor-made for the regional context. Finally, Insee's technical assistance can be in the form of investment in methodology or IT tools such as the Eretes software to help compile national accounts.

Statistics and economic studies

Cooperation activities cover various areas of official statistics, focusing mainly on economic statistics (statistics on production, short-term indicators and national accounts). Recently, however, there have been significant developments in cooperation in the field of social statistics, particularly with respect to employment, living conditions and poverty. Finally, Insee's technical assistance is often requested in the field of short-term economic analysis.

Geographical coverage

In recent years, the countries of central and eastern Europe have been an important area for Insee in the field of technical cooperation. The accession of most of these countries to the European Union has, however, led to a reduction in the demand for technical assistance in the form of missions and visits. Bilateral cooperation activities are being replaced more and more frequently by the organisation of seminars and training sessions. At the same time, the support given to countries bordering the EU — the Balkans, Russia and Ukraine — is being stepped up substantially.

The Mediterranean basin is also one of the geographical priorities for Insee cooperation, focusing mainly on bilateral relations with French-speaking countries. The programmes with Morocco and Tunisia are the most highly-developed and cover the widest range of fields. Lebanon and Algeria are also given technical assistance in the field of national accounts. Actions have also recently been run with other Mediterranean countries. Insee is also seeking

to develop multilateral actions to meet joint needs, particularly under programmes financed by the European Union (Medstat).

Cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa, which remains a historical priority, is provided through the secondment of experts to Afristat (see article below) and specific backing for its projects, support in training African statisticians and for the three African statistical colleges, and through the secondment of teachers and assistance to education teams.

In Latin America, cooperation is concentrated on actions developed under regional integration programmes with clearly identified priorities aimed at harmonising statistical tools or methods for the Community of Andean Nations (CAN), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Eclac) or Mercosur. Finally, some cooperation activities are conducted in Asia and the Pacific, principally with Vietnam on the target areas of modelling, support for schools, the training of trainers and the compilation of a French-Vietnamese statistical dictionary.

Insee cooperation in Africa through Afristat

The Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa, Afristat, was created in 1993 by the 14 African countries which were members of the franc area (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo) with support from France. It started its activities in 1996. Four other countries subsequently joined the organisation: Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania in 1998, Guinea in 2000 and Cape Verde in 2002. Afristat is based in Bamako, Mali and had 14 African and French experts in 2006.

Afristat is a sub-regional organisation whose mission is to assist the development of economic, social and environment statistics in its member states and to build up their capabilities in these areas. It thus forms part of the drive towards

African regional economic integration, which requires the uniformity and comparability of statistical information.

During the first 10 years of its existence, Afristat activities have helped these countries implement and perpetuate work in various fields of statistics and make progress in harmonisation. The nomenclatures and national price indices are harmonised at regional level. Afristat provides substantial technical support in the field of household surveys and the analysis of poverty as well as in the field of national accounts. As a result, 12 member states out of 18 have adopted the Eretes IT system for the compilation and harmonisation of their economic accounts.

The creation of Afristat led to a sea change in Insee's cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa. Resident technical assistance, i.e. the

posting of a French statistician to a statistical office abroad, has virtually disappeared in the region. Afristat is now the lynchpin of technical assistance to sub-Saharan Africa in the field of statistics.

Afristat is a sub-regional organisation whose mission is to assist the development of economic, social and environment statistics in its member states and to build up their capabilities in these areas. Photo: Afristat





Afristat is the lynchpin of technical assistance to sub-Saharan Africa in the field of statistics. One of its priorities is to overhaul the national accounts in its member states. Photo: Afristat

The development of rapid economic accounts: putting talk into action

One of Afristat's priorities is to overhaul the national accounts in its member states. The objective is to work with these countries in the regular production of reliable accounts, which are based on the principles and the methodology advocated by the SNA93 (United Nations' System of National Accounts 1993).

There are, however, still significant delays in compiling and publishing these accounts due to the limited financial resources allocated to them and the lack of data sources.

To make up for these delays, Afristat, with the backing of Insee, is setting up a project to develop rapid economic accounts (which are semi-definitive and/or provisional) in its member states. This project is based on five countries which

are representative of the very diverse situations encountered by statistical systems in the African continent: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania. Of these five, only Cameroon, which is up-to-date in compiling its final accounts, is working on the development of a provisional account. The other countries will drastically reduce the range of their nomenclatures in order to make up the delay, or even 'jump years', to get there.

National accountants from these countries will then be able to offer their support in passing on the experience they have acquired during the first part of the project. In the longer term, all the countries should be in a position to produce their own accounts within acceptable deadlines.

By François Coûté and Pierre Verdier, International Technical Cooperation Unit at Insee.

For further information:

www.insee.fr

www.afristat.org

E-mail: afriestat@afriestat.org

German statistical cooperation is a two-way process

At the beginning of the 1990s, when there was a sudden upsurge in demand for consultancy services in the wake of the changes in world politics, official cooperation in statistical matters was just getting underway in Germany. Under externally funded projects, cooperation was soon established with the countries of eastern Europe, the former members of the Soviet Union, and China. Fifteen years later, and after more than 1 400 cooperation projects with statistical offices in around 40 countries, Germany's official statistical authority is recognised and in demand as a partner in international cooperation.



Germany, the eastern part of which was also undergoing changes in the system, felt that it had a duty to pass on the experience it had gained on its own territory with the changeover from a planned economy to a market economy, and the federal structure characteristic of statistics in Germany could be incorporated into cooperation projects as a strong point.

One-off cooperation projects in specific areas have often grown into a multidisciplinary programme and initial contacts have led to long-lasting and close partnerships. We assisted some of our partner countries — and this is some-

thing that seemed a long way off when our cooperation began — not only in the changeover to a market economy but all the way to accession to the European Union and hence their full integration into the European statistical system.

Partnership between participants

Whether with candidates for EU accession (and, since 1 May 2004, new EU Member States), with the countries involved in the new European neighbourhood policy, or with threshold and developing countries outside Europe, Germa-



The Cooperation Unit in Bonn. Germany's statistical cooperation is always aimed at establishing a genuine partnership between the statistical offices involved.

ny's statistical cooperation is always aimed at establishing a genuine partnership between the statistical offices involved. The prime aim of every cooperation project is to pass on specialised knowledge in such a way that it will be retained, and thus contribute to the development of statistical capacity. Solutions that are regarded as ideal in Germany are not models to be taken over lock, stock and barrel by the partner countries. Instead, the experts of the participant countries meet in order to devise solutions that will work in the long term in the partner country.

A good example is the 'cross-border friendship database', which was developed jointly by Polish, Czech and German statisticians and made available to the public in 2004. This database, which contains a large volume of readily comparable statistics on Poland, the Czech Republic and Saxony, makes a major contribution to cross-border exchanges.

A bilateral project with the Chinese Statistical Office on foreign statistics is also a good example of how statistical cooperation can benefit both sides. China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has finally set up a publicly accessible database containing foreign statistics and published, for the first time, a yearbook of foreign statistics. The Federal Statistical Office has followed China's example and added further titles of tables, column headings and breakdown items in English.

At an international conference of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the future of statistics in China, held on 30 and 31 May 2000 in Beijing, experts singled out the German-Chinese project 'Reorganisation of industrial and transport statistics in the People's Republic of China' from some 30 other projects as exemplary because, in accordance with the United Nations recommendations on technical cooperation in the field of statistics, it was closely based on the require-

ments and conditions characteristic of the beneficiary country, and because both partners shared the responsibility for the implementation and results (ownership).

Twinning projects

The philosophy of exchanges between experts in the interests of both parties is particularly clear in Germany's statistical twinning projects promoted by the European Commission. First and foremost, 'twinning' means a close administrative partnership in connection with a specific, multidisciplinary project. On top of this, the cooperation is organised in such a way that it continues after the project as such has been completed.

Since the twinning project with the Polish Statistical Office on a statistical information system was launched in 2002, German statisticians have become active in this area with considerable success. Regular exchanges between the experts involved and a high level of own-responsibility on the

part of the beneficiary country are characteristic features of twinning, and our own approach to cooperation is also clearly manifested in these projects. In the meantime we have embarked on further twinning projects with Bulgaria, Latvia and Macedonia.

We have had a close partnership with the Turkish Statistical Office for several years now, and this has been stepped up in connection with the project entitled 'Upgrading the statistical system of Turkey (USST)'. Here too, exchanges between German and Turkish experts help both partners to learn from each other. For example, it is planned to introduce the jointly developed classification server for business statistics in the Federal Statistical Office too.

Preparation of the experts

Another important principle guiding our cooperation activities is the wide-ranging, rather than merely technical, preparation of the experts for their work. Despite an increasing number of international contacts, including ones



The Cooperation Unit in Wiesbaden. Years of experience have shown that transferring technical and methodological expertise is not enough to provide the beneficiary countries with efficient support.

outside the field of technical cooperation, the fact remains that working as an expert in a cooperation project makes different demands from the 'normal' working situation in one's own statistical office. It is not only a matter of having expert knowledge; it is also important to be able to put this knowledge across. The experts therefore receive language training — in the form of English courses, for example — and instructional training — for example, in the form of courses on presentation techniques, team development or international negotiation techniques — in preparation for their assignments. The efficient preparation of our experts contributes substantially to the success of our cooperation measures. Here we can reap the benefits of years of experience: younger experts are introduced to international cooperation with the support of our 'old hands', and in this way, we can hand over to the next generation, while still benefiting from past experience.

Intercultural preparation is, however, also steadily gaining in significance. For example, our major cooperation project with Turkey in Wiesbaden was launched with an intercultural communication event at which a speaker told the participants something about the history and culture of the country and introduced them to features and conventions that are characteristic of a normal working day in Turkey. A major project with China also began with intercultural training of the project leaders. Intercultural preparation will continue to gain in significance, since it is apparent that the emphasis on statistical cooperation by Germany has for some time now been shifting towards new regions — particularly in the neighbouring countries to the east and south-east of the EU and the non-European countries covered by the UN initiative for reducing poverty (millennium development goals).

From beneficiaries to providers of expertise

This geographical extension of cooperation activities is a response to political requirements, but is also a reflection of the development of the statistical systems of the new Member States — not least because of the success of consultancy work hitherto. A clear change can be detected in relations with countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia or Slovakia: whereas cooperation work used to be largely focused on those countries, they are now devel-

oping from beneficiaries of support into partners that take on, together with German experts, cooperation projects for other countries.

Statistical capacity building — a new focus

Not only are the partner countries changing — so is the subject matter of the cooperation projects. Years of experience have shown that transferring technical and methodological expertise is not enough to provide the beneficiary countries with efficient support. In order to ensure sustainability, the organisational structures, administrative procedures and personnel management of the statistical offices must be geared to the requirements facing them as providers of modern information services. This is what is meant by 'statistical capacity building'.

We attach great importance to improving the institutional context, and, for this reason, we are increasingly including interdisciplinary elements in our cooperation projects. Events on subjects such as strategic planning, staffing or project management are aimed at the managerial level in the partner authorities. The Federal Statistical Office has, for several years, been offering modular courses tailored to the situations in the partner countries in question on the basis of the existing level of knowledge and need for support. Examples include workshops and study visits on total quality management in Bulgaria and Turkey, seminars on strategic management in Serbia, and a joint 'Twinning-light project' with the Czech Statistical Office entitled *Strategische Planung und Management statistischer Aktivitäten* [Strategic planning and management of statistical activities].

Germany's statistical cooperation will also be geared in future to the inclusion of multidisciplinary elements of this kind in projects for the further development of technical capacity, in order to ensure their success in the long term.

After more than 15 years of successful activity it is clear to us that statistical cooperation is a two-way process. Knowledge is transferred in both directions, since an important side-effect of communicating technical expertise is the strengthening of the competence of our own experts.

By Ringo Raupach, Federal Statistical Office, Germany.

For further information:

www.destatis.de
www.crossborderdatabase.de

Istat: cooperation leading to results

Istat, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, has been focusing on statistical cooperation since the mid-1990s. Its involvement has increased considerably in the past few years, and statistical cooperation is now considered a 'core business' of the Institute.



Photo: Pierre Cester

Over the years, the nature and amount of Istat's statistical cooperation, as well as the areas of intervention and cooperation partners have changed. If at first it responded to specific limited requests originating either from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from Eurostat, it has now developed its own strategy, which strives to meet, as far as possible, the requests of partner countries' national statistical institutes (NSIs) with both the internal expertise and financial resources available in the office.

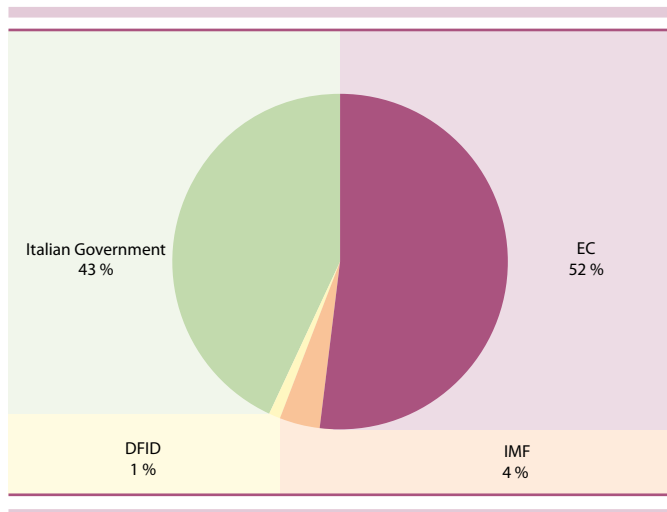
The strategic objectives of Istat's statistical cooperation are to:

1. reinforce national statistical systems, advocating the adoption of European and international standards and the sharing of best statistical practices;
2. strengthen the role of Istat at the international level, intervening in sectors where it can offer qualified expertise
3. and ensure effectiveness of actions;
3. promote the presence of Istat in national and international contexts concerning the role of official statistics for the monitoring of development policies;
4. step up relations with national institutions, notably the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the design of development cooperation policies and for the bilateral funding, inter alia, of statistical cooperation projects.

Sources of funding

Istat own resources allocated to technical cooperation activities are limited and not enough to cover all requests and needs. The sources for project financing are thus mainly external, although Istat often contributes especially by assigning additional human resources.

Sources of funding



The main external funding sources are:

- the Italian Government, by means of agreements between Istat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs — Directorate-General for Development Cooperation;
- the European Commission, through its public tenders and twinning contracts, and, to a limited extent, with grants managed directly by Eurostat;
- other sources, either bilateral from other countries (for example the UK Government Department for Interna-

tional Development (DFID)) or from international organisations, such as the IMF, World Bank, Paris21, etc.

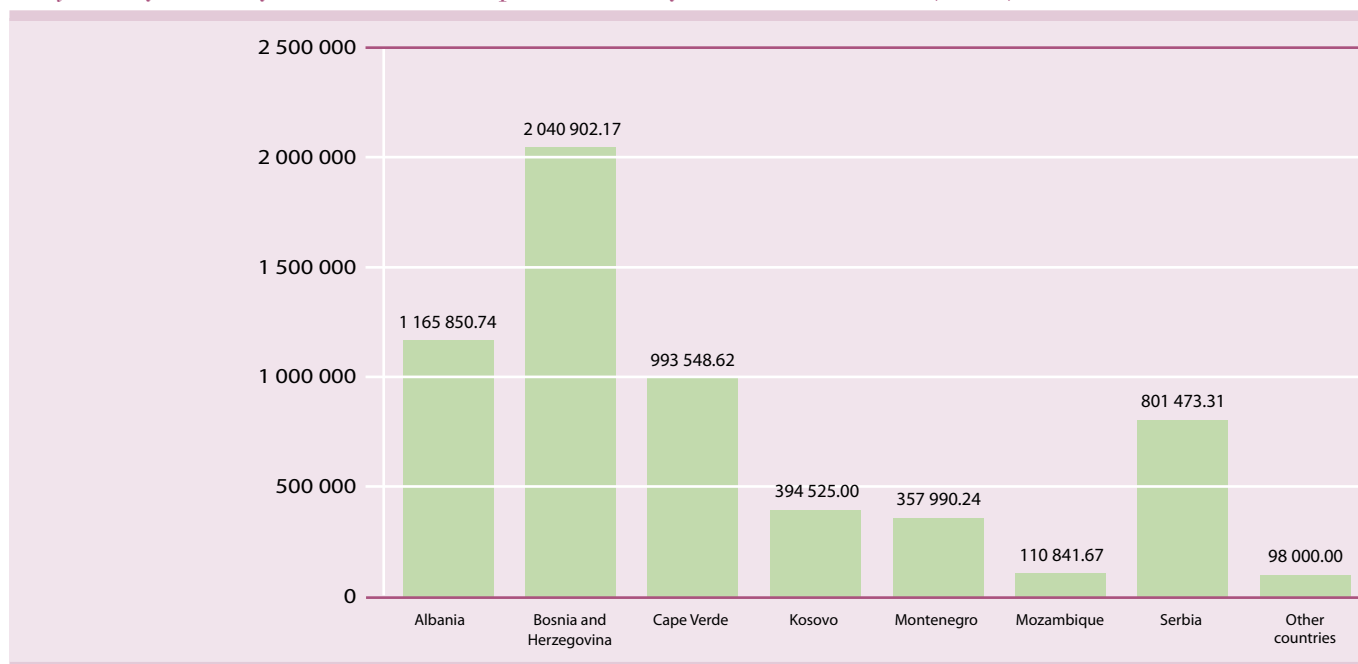
In recent years, the need to set up consortia to participate in European Commission tenders has introduced an interesting new dimension to cooperation, forcing the providers of technical expertise to cooperate among themselves in order to streamline resources and know-how to deliver results. In addition, NSIs often have to deal with private sector enterprises and institutions. Although the majority of Istat’s projects are currently implemented in partnership with other NSIs, Istat is adapting itself to these new tendering procedures by presenting projects jointly with private institutions.

Choosing partner countries

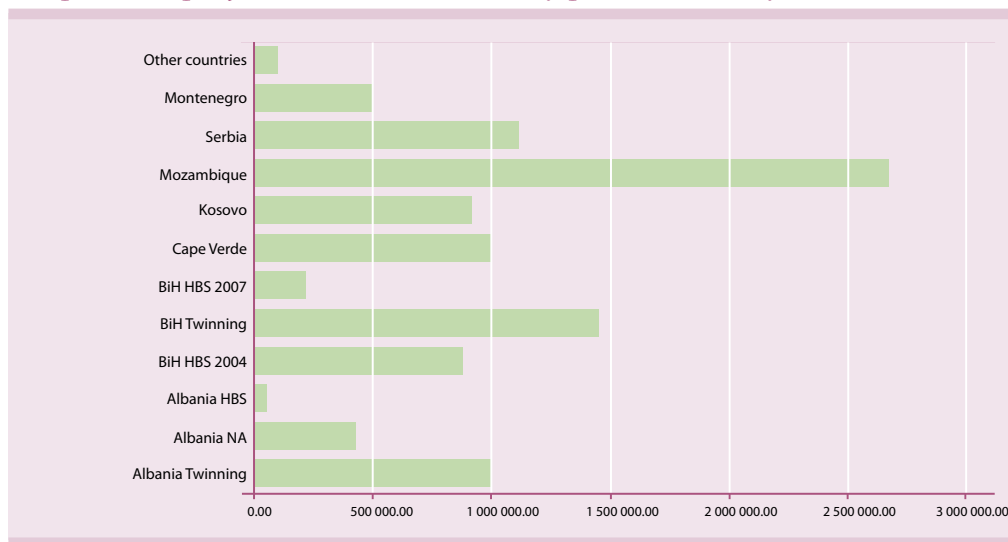
The selection of Istat cooperation partner countries is mainly demand-driven. Other criteria depend on the evaluation of various issues and circumstances.

On the one hand, the relevance that the partner country has for our institutional and financing bodies, mainly the Italian Government and the European Union, is taken into consideration in order to gain the maximum support from both the political standpoint as well as the availability of funds.

Projects by country, and amount implemented by Istat, since 2004 (EUR)



Cooperation projects, overall amount, by partner country (EUR)



This graph alongside shows the overall amount of Istat's cooperation projects from 2004. Most projects, although implemented in consortium with other NSIs or institutions, are managed directly by Istat, which is responsible for the technical delivery.

Areas of intervention

Istat has been involved in many different cooperation subject matter areas. In practice, the possibility to decide

On the other hand, it is necessary to take into careful consideration the availability of the human resources with relevant expertise in the thematic fields where technical assistance is required. The practical assurance that those resources will be released when needed, whether within Istat or any consortium member, is a possible problematic area, as cooperation activities are often seen as 'additional activities', able to be rearranged around more urgent NSI activities.

In addition, another important element to take into account when choosing a partner country, is the knowledge of the NSI and the country itself. Although this is not a general rule, the knowledge of the context is very relevant to the way activities are designed, planned and implemented. It can add to the effectiveness of the intervention, both in terms of the results achieved and of the wider possibility of having an impact within the statistical system and beyond, into the local or national policy environment.

Istat was initially active in central and east European countries (today's new Member States or candidate countries), in the western Balkans and in Russia and the Newly Independent States, with ad hoc activities, mainly supported by Eurostat. In recent years it has widened considerably its areas of intervention to southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, China, Cape Verde and Mozambique, and some Latin American countries (Mercosur and Andean Pact).

The graph on the previous page shows Istat's partner countries in projects from 2004 onwards. Countries are shown on the basis of the amount of Istat's direct involvement, but most projects are larger in amount given the participation of other NSIs and institutions.

in which areas to intervene is always fairly limited, as these are mainly set by both the requesting country and the donor institution. Istat may, however decide not to intervene in a given project due to a lack of expert availability in the specific area.

It should also be noted that a certain number of donors do not financially support data collection activities, which are very important for countries where the basic statistical structure is not yet in place. Although the non-allocation of funds for data collection is considered an element of sustainability for the NSIs, the result may be a slowdown in the availability of quality data. The support for data collection, or the lack of it, characterises considerably the type of intervention provided. Projects that imply data collection have a direct impact on both the availability of better quality data in the short to medium term, as well as on the nature of the technical assistance provided, as they require continuous support and hands-on training throughout the whole production cycle. Other projects, focusing mainly on methodological training or analysis, may lead to good or even excellent results as far as methodological and theoretical knowledge, but this is then applied to existing data, of often poor quality.

The graph on the next page shows the major areas of intervention of the components — within each project mentioned above — implemented by Istat directly.

A case for increased and focused NSI action

The acknowledgement of the role of statistics in development cooperation programmes, and the need to advocate

Istat's areas of intervention



a stronger statistical capacity of countries, even within the wider context of poverty reduction strategies and the moni-

toring of millennium development goals, calls for an increased and even more focused level of participation of NSIs, aimed at strengthening national statistical systems, with a view to supporting evidence-based decision-making, monitoring processes and measuring new phenomena. In order to allow and strengthen the active participation of official statisticians in technical cooperation activities, NSIs need to be supported, as they are often faced with the difficult option of complying with their current and ever-demanding statistical production work and releasing qualified professional resources for cooperation activities.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The projects that Istat has developed with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the field of statistics over the past years are a significant example of all the issues mentioned above.

The first contacts were established 10 years ago at the initiative of colleagues from BiH, when the overall geopolitical situation was still quite unclear, which had an impact on the institutional statistical set-up. The Italian Government was, at the time, the first foreign body active in the statistical field, followed by the EU, which highlighted the need to have a statistical body able to represent the State as a whole, and thus be able to receive foreign financing. Pressure, particularly from the EU, coupled with the crucial need to have quality data, resulted in the establishment in 1998 of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics (BHAS), which, together with the two pre-existing statistical offices, forms the core of the national statistical system in BiH. The existing statistical institutions, the Federal Office of Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FOS) and the Institute of Statistics of the Republika Srpska (RSIS), together with the BHAS, have had to undergo a reorganisation of their duties and responsibilities, the working environment, staff and reference governing body: the process is still ongoing, and subject to continuous updating.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Istat has worked within the framework of projects funded by different institutions, which has

exposed our institute to very different implementation procedures: as a partner in a consortium in an EU-funded project, working with funds of Italian bilateral source, in a twinning project also funded by the EU, with very specific rules, and in a new project co-financed by Italian and UK resources.



Zdenko Milinovic, Director at the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) together with some of his colleagues.



Coordination among donors is a very important activity that often lags behind. However, in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina it was efficiently organised from the start. At present coordination is under the auspices of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics and has brought some good results in the implementation of the projects.

The possibility to experience different implementation procedures in the same country has been enlightening and valuable for Istat. On a general basis, it allows the comparison of the impact different rules may have on technical assistance. It also shows which rules are most suited to obtain quality results and to ensure sustainability. It would be interesting to compare these views with the experience of the partner institutions in BiH.

The use of these different procedures was also linked to the different areas of intervention Istat has been involved in. Istat was initially engaged in a variety of 'basic' fields — ranging from the setting up of the basic statistical infrastructure, the law, basic organisation of work among the institutes, training and IT. It then moved to the implementation of activities in more limited, but relevant, subject matter areas such as national accounts, to finally focus on the design and implementation of the household budget survey (HBS), thus covering a complete production cycle. Also from this angle, the work has enabled an in-depth analysis of the different options that are made available when merging the type of work required in the given field and the way that this is put into practice. Certainly both of these variables — funds and areas of intervention — are strictly linked, and often it is the combination of the two (coupled with the type and quality of the human expertise provided) that determines the success or failure of a technical cooperation project.

Coordination leading to results

One other important area of work which Istat has experienced, in particular throughout its presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, concerns coordination among donors. This very important activity — to which the community of donors does not dedicate sufficient attention and efforts — has been initiated quite efficiently in BiH, with the organisation of donor meetings in the field of statistics: Istat itself organised the first one in 1998, which was then followed by other such meetings organised by international institutions. The activity is now rightly under the auspices of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Agency for Statistics and has brought some good results in the implementation of the projects. Given the fairly short history of intervention by donors in the country and the sound and correct management of the projects by the active donors themselves, coordination among them in this country has proven to give results.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country which is making efforts to establish a sound national statistical system, taking on board all the needs and requirements to reach compliance progressively with the *acquis communautaire*, respectful of national characteristics and needs. The projects implemented by donors in full partnership with the local statistical institutes are aimed at supporting such developments and strengthening local capacities in a sustainable manner.

By Michelle Jouvenal, Office for International Relations and Cooperation, Istat.

Statistics Lithuania: from beneficiary to assistance provider

Preparation for membership of the EU and the transformation of Lithuania's economy from a planned to a market economy marked a challenging stage in the history of Statistics Lithuania. The qualifications and knowledge acquired by our statisticians during that period have, in recent years, allowed Statistics Lithuania to assist less experienced statistical offices.



The international consulting team of Statistics Lithuania: Raimonda Šimiene, Dalia Mačiutiene, Laima Brakauskienė, Daiva Norkevičienė, Gaile Dapšienė, Alma Rutkauskienė and Michail Solovjov. In the coming years, Statistics Lithuania will continue providing technical assistance to, for example, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the western Balkans.

Statistics Lithuania experienced some very busy years taking on board all the EU *acquis communautaire* in statistics to comply with EU requirements and standards. The process was guided by the European Union with the aid of experts from the EU Member States and international organisations.

Numerous experts used to 'live' at Statistics Lithuania, sharing their knowledge and experience. The efforts of the devoted staff of Statistics Lithuania, with the assistance of the EU consultants, finally resulted in successful integration within the ESS. The increased qualifications of specialists and the knowledge gained and accumulated in the accession process have now opened up a new opportunity and perspective for Lithuanian statisticians, on top of their day-to-day statistical business, to undertake technical assistance projects and get actively involved in providing expertise to less experienced statistical offices.

The strategy outlined

In 2002, a strategy for Statistics Lithuania for 2002–04 was drafted, including the first steps towards providing technical assistance.

The Russian-speaking countries, i.e. those of the former Soviet Union, were the first that Statistics Lithuania started to work with. This decision was determined by four factors.

Firstly, Statistics Lithuania has spent most of the last decade strengthening its capacity and securing well-motivated and professional staff, who, in turn, could pass on their expertise to others. Their experience with the transition is recent and therefore fresh.

Secondly, there are some similarities between the statistical systems. Nobody can deny the value of the 'old Member

States' and their competence has contributed enormously. In some cases, however, their experts may have faced a lack of knowledge and understanding of how the statistical systems used to function in the beneficiary countries and what could be the least painful and shortest path to the European standard. This path is not easy, but is now very familiar to the Lithuanian statisticians.

Thirdly, there is the Russian language, which is becoming a more and more difficult challenge since all methodologies, concepts and especially terminology are in English. However, the vast majority of our experts have a very good command of Russian. Direct communication on complex statistical topics without using the services of interpreters or translators has enhanced the value of our expertise. This might be a problem in the future though, since the new generation more often opts for French or German as the second foreign language at school.

Last but not least, apart from the actual knowledge gained from international experts, the staff of Statistics Lithuania have benefited from the way these experts work, how they communicate, etc. since communication skills are equally as important as professional skills.

All these factors meant that including technical assistance in the strategy was a realistic possibility. The strategy document stated that 'Lithuanian statistical experts with their upgraded skills are able to provide methodological support to the countries in the process of transition towards a market economy and aiming to implement the fundamental principles of official statistics, and are able to take part in projects to advise the experts of the statistical agencies of the Balkan countries and Tacis countries on business, foreign trade, demographic and other statistical issues, under the methodo-

logical guidance of Eurostat and the experts of the statistical agencies of the EU Member States'.

The strategy for 2005–07 carries forward the strategic targets of the previous years and states that 'in cooperation with the other NSIs, Statistics Lithuania will participate in providing technical assistance to other countries, such as those of the CIS, western Balkans, and others. In some cases such projects will be developed and implemented by Statistics Lithuania itself'. The latter aim coincides with Lithuania's strategy to expand its development cooperation as a donor country.

Concrete experience with technical assistance

From 2001 to 2003, the specialists of Statistics Lithuania provided consultancy services for the Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan statistical services within the Tacis programme in the area of business and foreign trade statistics.

In the business statistics project for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the data quality of business statistics was improved by introducing a new business statistics system based on coordinated characteristics and observation units used in different types of business statistics surveys and reducing the response burden on enterprises. The contents of the business statistics surveys, their periodicity, the questionnaires used, data treatment methods and the publication of the results were studied in the two countries. The possibility of implementing EU standards for short-term and structural business statistics was analysed and discussed. Recommendations for the improvement of the business register in order to meet business statistics needs were made, so that the beneficiaries could introduce concrete improvements.

The project dealing with foreign trade in goods and services in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan brought about improvements in statistical methodology, the procedures for data compilation, processing and correction, and the dissemination of statistics on foreign trade and international trade in services. The quality and coverage of foreign trade data was increased by expanding cooperation between customs and the statistical offices. There were improvements in data verification and correction routines, such as price and logic checks and the analysis of data coverage in customs procedures. Mirror comparisons were made between the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan foreign trade statistics and reasons for discrepancies were identified. Uzbekistan introduced an extended services classification in the survey on international trade in services. Kazakhstan made substantial improvements in the international tourism statistics survey by preparing and implementing new questionnaires.



Photo: EPA



The knowledge gained in the accession process has opened up a new opportunity and perspective for Lithuanian statisticians — to undertake technical assistance projects and get actively involved in providing expertise to less experienced statistical offices. Photo of the Curonian Spit in Lithuania.
EPA Photo / Igor Sarembo

The above results reflect the success of the projects, but this is not always measurable, since the transition from theoretical acknowledgement of the problems to solutions and practical implementation always requires more time and effort than is usually foreseen in the projects, given that the period available to implement the projects is often very limited. Apart from concrete statistical knowledge, each project always provides additional value that can contribute to the overall development of the beneficiary statistical office. A presentation of the Lithuanian statistical system, its functions, structures, planning, programming, development projects, etc., is always on the agenda for the consultancy visits, thus giving beneficiaries an opportunity to understand how the entire system operates in the new European environment.

The right ingredients for success

A few remarks may be made on important risk factors.

Firstly, the support of the beneficiary's top management is crucial. Even before the start of the project, their clear commitment to have the EU statistical standards fully implemented in their offices is indispensable; otherwise the projects would be implemented more on a theoretical than a practical level. The willingness of the statistical office of a beneficiary country to adopt the EU statistical standards and its ability to introduce them should be clearly expressed and communicated throughout the statistical office.

Secondly, most of the post-Soviet countries previously used a different set of statistical standards and were obliged to exchange data within the CIS according to these standards. The implementation of new concepts takes a long time. The beneficiary country has to be aware that the changes in statistical standards have to be introduced in all related areas of statistics to ensure coherence across statistical

fields. For instance, a new concept for statistical units to be introduced in industry statistics should be also taken into account in developing retail trade or services statistics and in the national accounts. Therefore, a long-term strategy is advisable for introducing the new concepts and standards approved by the top management, with projects prepared accordingly.

Thirdly, teamwork in the beneficiary country is advisable so that more specialists could benefit from the project, and continuity is secured in case specialists are replaced.

Fourthly, in cases where several donors are involved in developing the same statistical area in the beneficiary country, coordination between them is of utmost importance, so as not to overburden the beneficiary statistical office with the same fact-finding tasks and, even more importantly, to avoid the duplication and overlapping of actions.

The challenges of change

It is almost a cliché to say that change has to become a way of life for transition countries. Nevertheless, changing people's thinking and behaviour is the way to success, and people need to be comfortable with such change. Knowledge is the capacity for effective action. Also important is the ability to deal with many different people. When people feel that you are interested in them, when you try to find the right solution taking into account their viewpoints, then they will open up and the efficiency of dialogue will be much greater. There is always a further improvement to make, another step to take, even if it is a great challenge!

By Daiva Norkevičienė, Head of the European Affairs and International Cooperation Division, Statistics Lithuania.

For further information:
www.stat.gov.lt/en

Spain–Latin America statistical cooperation: a focus on training



Antonio M. Salcedo Galiano, Deputy Director of International Relations, National Statistics Institute of Spain.

The National Statistics Institute (INE) of Spain is in charge of the ‘preparation and implementation of general plans for international technical cooperation in statistical matters’, according to the Spanish Law 12/1989 of 9 May on the Function of Public Statistics. The International Relations Directorate is the executive unit responsible for the boosting, promotion and management of the statistical technical cooperation activity. This is carried out within INE with other countries and in line with the general guidelines established by INE’s Management Board, on the basis of the Framework Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2005–08 drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. INE Spain has in particular a long tradition of cooperation with Latin American countries in which training occupies a significant place.

at an international level. However, due to the fact that the available resources are limited, it is essential to give priority to INE’s preferred action areas.

INE develops its cooperation activities basically in three geographical regions: Latin America, central and eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean countries.

Latin America: These are countries that have special historic and cultural links with Spain. In the last 30 years, INE has developed an intense and continuous cooperation with them.

INE organises various types of activities through the implementation of the Latin American statisticians training programme, with the support of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI), and within the cooperation agreement framework between INE and the International and Latin American Foundation of Public Policies and General Government (FIIAPP). Training courses, seminars and missions have been carried out within this programme, both in Spain and in several countries of the Latin American region.

Moreover, INE has intensified the bilateral relationships with the national statistical institutes of Mexico, Argentina and Chile, and the Secretary-General of the Andean Community (CAN) by signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with them. Putting into effect the MOUs has automatically strengthened the cooperation actions carried out with all these organisations.

In this context, the International Relations Directorate organises and participates in multiple cooperation and technical assistance actions

Finally, INE also receives and manages multiple bilateral cooperation applications coming directly from the statistical institutes of the Latin American countries.

Central and eastern Europe: Technical assistance of INE in this region is focused on support to the new Member States and candidate countries in their transition process, with regard to the institutional development and the updating and improvement of their national statistics systems.

In this geographical area, the INE contributes intensely to helping these countries to implement the *acquis communautaire* related to statistics through the PHARE programme, which is funded by the European Union. More specifically, INE has organised a number of study visits, traineeships and in-country training courses for statisticians of the national statistics offices of these countries.

Mediterranean countries: INE is currently increasing its cooperation activities in this area through the European Commission Medstat II programme.

Outside these three main geographical regions, INE always tries to meet the requirements of the applications received from any statistical office that asks directly for cooperation actions and technical support.

The Latin American statisticians training programme

The main objective of the Latin American statisticians training programme is to reinforce and update the Latin American statistical systems through their human resources training. By this, INE contributes to the methodological harmonisation, the comparability of the statistics produced in Latin America, and the exchange of knowledge and know-how,



In the middle, INE's President, Ms Carmen Alcaide, and the International Relations Director, Mr Antonio Martínez, with lecturers and participants of the national accounts course held in Madrid (Spain) from 9 to 20 October 2006, in the framework of the Latin American statisticians training programme.

thus promoting best practices in all the countries. This programme includes among its activities the carrying out of courses, seminars and expert missions in order to provide short-term technical assistance.

The Latin American statisticians training programme is the international technical cooperation programme with the longest tradition of the INE. The programme is now jointly financed by INE and the AECI. The administrative and financing management is the responsibility of the FIIAPP, which is an organisation with wide experience and great importance in the international cooperation scene.

INE's share of the budget usually covers registration fees, travel and hotel expenses of the lecturers and participants. There is, in addition, an in-kind amount that includes classrooms, educational material, secretary services, mail services, telephone, supplies, etc. The AECI contributes with the lodging and maintenance of the participants in the seminars held at its training centres located in Antigua (Guatemala), Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) and Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia). These centres place at the disposal of the programme their logistical infrastructure and staff resources. It should be mentioned that there is a growing participation of the statistical offices and the central banks of the Latin American region, and they often offer their collaboration as hosts for the holding of seminars.

The programme tries to fulfil the current needs of the statistical offices of the Latin American countries, focusing on the main development objectives. The learning activities com-

bine a theoretical approach with a practical method, so that the participants are able to apply and transmit the acquired knowledge within their organisations.

Since 1992, when the first course was organised, more than 3 300 statisticians from Latin America have been trained. In 2005, two two-week courses were carried out in Spain and five one-week seminars were held in Latin America. In 2006 a total of 11 training activities took place under the programme: six of them were organised in Spain, four in Latin America, and there was an additional e-learning course via the Internet.

The 2006 training activities of the programme covered many different statistical topics. The training activities held in Spain dealt with household surveys, tourism statistics, statistical indicators for decision-making, national accounts, financial accounts, and data collection.

In the case of the training activities organised in Latin America, there were four seminars planned on modernisation of the national statistical offices, science and technology indicators, statistical classifications and registers, and industrial indicators and surveys. Lastly, there was one additional on-line course about fundamentals and practices of surveys to enterprises and establishments.

By Antonio M. Salcedo Galiano, International Relations Deputy Director, INE, Spain.

UK support to statistical capacity building



The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) supports long-term programmes to help tackle the underlying causes of poverty. The main focus of all our work is the achievement of the eight internationally agreed millennium development goals (MDGs).

Across the international development community, demand is growing to improve the capacity of national and international statistical systems to produce and use data for development. National governments and donors are realising that statistics are needed not only to monitor development progress but also in order to achieve it. Better statistics make it possible to analyse complex social and economic problems in detail, help policymakers choose the best interventions to deliver the desired outcomes and allow progress to be monitored and evaluated.

A flexible and demand-driven approach

The principle of DFID's support to statistical capacity building is that we take a holistic approach. In essence, we have no single method or preferred means for providing support to statistics — although the overarching principle is that the need is demand driven. For example, we support national governments (both national statistical offices and the broader national statistical systems), regional bodies, and international agencies. Our support can be in the form of funding, provision of technical expertise or the secondment of our staff. We cover all the dimensions of a statistical system from the legal framework to the physical infrastructure, from staff management and training to dissemination and release practices. Our support is not sector specific and we allow our partners to draw on experts from around the world not just from the UK. Support can be short term and discrete or long term and strategic or any combination of the above.

We believe that this flexible approach offers the potential to achieve the best long-term and sustainable outcomes. However, it also makes it much harder for us to assess the impact and attribute this to our support rather than if we were just funding a survey, providing a training course or helping a country move to latest system of national accounts. The following examples from our current portfolio of work demonstrate the variety of approaches.

D FID is unique amongst bilateral development agencies in having a cadre of statistics advisers who work in developing countries as well as in headquarters. DFID's statistics advisers fulfil a variety of roles including: producing internal management statistics on DFID's programmes and expenditure; providing statistical and analytical support to DFID policy areas; supporting national governments to strengthen their statistical capacity; and working with the international system to better monitor progress towards the United Nations' millennium development goals (MDGs). DFID statistics advisers are members of the United Kingdom's (UK) Government Statistical Service. This article focuses on the work DFID does to support statistical capacity building in partner countries and in the international statistical system.



'The principle of DFID's support to statistical capacity building is that we take a holistic approach,' says Julia Bunting.
Photo: © EC/ECHO: F. Goemans

DFID supports developing countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Pakistan and Bolivia.

Supporting statistical development in Uganda

DFID has been providing technical and financial assistance to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), since it became a semi-autonomous organisation in 2000. The support has been provided in three phases. Phase one focused on building the capacity of management in corporate planning, improving processes for carrying out work, and strengthening economic statistics. Phase two concentrated on providing support to the UBOS Board and management to implement their corporate plan, coordinate donor inputs and develop UBOS's role as coordinator of Uganda's statistical infrastructure. The current phase is part of a wider project to 'strengthen evidence-based decision-making in Uganda'. This aims to improve the accountability of the Government of Uganda by strengthening monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the poverty eradication action plan and promoting poverty analysis to support policy and budget decisions.

At the request of UBOS, a DFID statistics adviser is based part-time in the office. Their role is to support this work, provide technical advice, and assist in the coordination of donor activities as UBOS moves to joint donor funding rather than discrete project inputs.

Pooling our support to statistics in Tanzania

In Tanzania, we have historically provided technical support to individual statistical activities including the census, household budget survey and national accounts. However, Tanzania has now developed plans to strengthen statistical activities across the whole of government through its poverty monitoring master plan (PMMP). This responds to the need for information to plan and monitor policies related to Tanzania's national poverty reduction strategy. The PMMP is funded by pooling resources from six development partners (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the UK and the EC) along with funding from the Tanzanian government. Since 2001, DFID has contributed GBP 1 million annually to this initiative. Pooled funding enables money to be directed more towards Tanzania's own priorities than to the needs of individual donors.

Supporting the reform and restructuring of statistics in Pakistan

DFID is currently developing a programme of up to GBP 5 million over three to five years to strengthen the Government of Pakistan's Statistics Division. The government has initiated a process of reform and restructuring which will see the three departments of the Statistics Division (the Federal Bureau of Statistics, the Population Census Organisation and the Agriculture Census Organisation) merge into a new Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The DFID programme plans to support the government with the reforms needed to establish a functioning and efficient Bureau of Statistics. The reforms will include: revising statistical legislation, policies and regulations; strengthening financial and human resource management systems; modernising IT systems and data collection and dissemination methods and strengthening staff training and professionalism. The reform programme aims to improve the credibility and availability of data to support government policymaking and planning. The ultimate objective is to create a more transparent, accountable and effective government which is better able to meet the needs of the poor.

Support to evidence-based decision-making in Bolivia

In Bolivia, a middle-income country where we provide limited financial assistance, DFID has been providing strategic support to the national statistical institute (INE) to implement a project designed to reach out to decision-makers across the country. Rather than generate new information, this project has aimed to make existing information much more accessible to local users, by:

- printing large quantities of high-demand products, e.g. small-area population projections, a statistical atlas, municipal development indicators, and geographically disaggregated national accounts;
- producing visually attractive materials, such as wall-charts of municipal indicators, and posters on the MDGs;
- improving the website by consulting with users and

implementing their recommendations;

- conducting two-day, active-learning, training workshops with delegations from all of the 327 municipalities;
- distributing a range of statistical materials at a national municipal fair.

Our support to multilateral initiatives

In addition to our bilateral support to countries, DFID also supports a number of the multilateral statistical capacity building initiatives which have begun over the last few years in response to the international community's recognition of the need for better development information. This includes support to: the Partnership In Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris21) hosted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) hosted by Paris21; the World Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB); the International Monetary Fund's General Data Dissemination System (GDDS); the Health Metrics Network (HMN) hosted by the World Health Organisation (WHO); and, the statistics offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

DFID provides financial support and/or the secondment of staff to these initiatives. We also sit on a number of the boards and steering committees. Our support to all of these global initiatives aims to develop a comprehensive, coherent and relevant international statistical system that conforms to good statistical practice, improves harmonisation, and meets the evidence and monitoring and evaluation needs of developing countries and other stakeholders.

The ultimate aim for all of DFID's support to statistical capacity building is the elimination of poverty. We believe that having good statistics, allied to appropriate government policies, can change things radically and for the better.

By Julia Bunting, Statistics Adviser, UK Department for International Development (DFID).

For further information:

www.dfid.gov.uk

www.internationalsurveynetwork.org

www.healthmetricsnetwork.org

E-mail Julia Bunting: j-bunting@dfid.gov.uk

Statistics Sweden favours long-term 'twinning' projects

Statistics Sweden has exported services in the field of statistics since the early 1980s. The aim is to give support to developing countries and countries undergoing the transition from planned to market economies in building up and developing their statistical systems. Statistics Sweden's staff take part in consultancy activities and provide expert advice and knowledge development in the partner countries. Statistics Sweden is active in more than 30 countries and their preferred way of working is through 'twinning'.



Statistics Sweden's (SCB) international activities are administered by the International Consulting Office (ICO), which was formed in 1983 and is a department of the SCB. The ICO thus has almost 25 years of experience in international consultancy work. The ICO has a staff of 12.

The objective of the ICO is to market and carry out consultancy activities commercially within the field of the SCB's responsibilities in the international market. Clients or partners are primarily national statistical offices and ministries with their own statistical activities in developing countries and countries undergoing the transition from planned to market economies.

The overall purpose of the export of services is:

- to strengthen the statistical systems in developing countries and transition economies;
- to contribute towards Sweden's global development policy (fair and sustainable global development);
- to enhance the good international reputation of Sweden and the SCB;
- to help develop the skills of SCB staff.

ICO's turnover in 2005 amounted to around EUR 9 million. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) provided around 80 % of the funding. The remainder



Statistics Sweden prefers to work in so-called 'institutional cooperation'. Cooperation fosters close relations between the offices and between individual officials and experts in both countries. An important element of institutional cooperation is the priority given to the transfer of knowledge so that the beneficiary body itself can, in the long run, conduct further activities without any assistance. Photo of the Royal Opera house in Stockholm. © European Commission

came mainly from the EU, the Danish development agency (Danida), foreign aid agencies and UN bodies.

Since June 2004, there has been a framework agreement (*Följsam*) between Sida and Statistics Sweden which covers all Sida-financed projects. The aim of the cooperation is to make use of the knowledge gained within the SCB's field of expertise in Swedish development cooperation. Some of the areas covered include efforts to:

- help build up infrastructure and capacity in the field of statistics in the partner countries;
- assist partner countries in the development, production, dissemination and use of statistics;
- support the partner countries' involvement in international statistical cooperation.

It is intended that the SCB and Sida work together in seeking to develop and update the SCB's skills in areas of relevance to this activity.

Active in more than 30 countries

Statistics Sweden is active in some 30 countries, spread across the following regions: the Balkans (7), the Commonwealth of Independent States (8), Latin America and the Caribbean (6), Africa (5) and Asia (4).

On average, there are around 16 persons working on long-term contracts and slightly over 400 short-term contracts performed by some 160 persons. Statistics Sweden also receives 30–40 groups of persons on study trips each year.

Statistics Sweden's staff are given the opportunity to work under different conditions and in new environments. Coop-

eration activities also enhance their skills and give them a greater understanding of the conditions governing the production of statistics in different institutional and economic situations.

In recent years, the ICO has placed an emphasis on renewing its circle of consultants. In 2006, 15 persons left on traineeships and around 25 left to take up their first short-term contracts for the ICO.

Twinning preferable

Statistics Sweden prefers to work in so-called 'institutional cooperation'. Institutional cooperation is considered to be long-term cooperation with a sister organisation in another country. Cooperation fosters close relations between the offices and between individual officials and experts in both countries. The beneficiary body can count on having access to experts in all fields of statistics. An important element of institutional cooperation is the priority given to the transfer of knowledge so that the beneficiary body itself can, in the long run, conduct further activities without any assistance.

Two important components in Statistics Sweden's cooperation model are: to use one or more long-term consultants on site in the beneficiary country and to use short-term consultants, who offer specialist knowledge in a specific area on site in the beneficiary country for a period ranging from a few days to a few weeks. Other components are study visits and training and having a project coordinator back home responsible for coordination between the project and the SCB.

By Ronnie Andersson, International Consulting Office, Statistics Sweden.

The Swedish experience in Vietnam: a success story

In June 1994, the Government of Sweden agreed to support the Government of Vietnam's ongoing economic reform programme with some projects aimed at improving the effectiveness of the reforms. A project for support to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) was finalised in 1995, and later in the year Statistics Sweden (SCB) was contracted as the institutional consultant.

Three project phases were implemented in the period 1995–2005, where the immediate objective remained 'Timely supply of economic statistical information of appropriate quality and in cost-efficient forms'. In this period, SCB assigned a team leader and additional long-term advisors to GSO and facilitated short-term technical assistance. Study tours and international meetings have been financed and training courses in English and specific subject matters have been provided.

GSO established a project steering committee with overall responsibility for the project. The day-to-day management was taken care of by the GSO project administrator in close cooperation with the SCB team leader and the subject matter departments concerned.

The Sida-supported projects at GSO have been very successful. The evaluation team has reached a positive conclusion in the assessment of project achievements in relation to each of the five standard evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability.

Promoted openness and democracy

As regards relevance, the project objectives are in line with the objectives of the Vietnamese Government and society at large, especially the business sector, which demand good economic statistics. It has addressed important problems defined by GSO.

The projects have supported Vietnam's transformation to a market-based economy, which in turn is a major cause of the economic growth that is responsible for most poverty reduction, which is the overall goal for Sida. They contribute to one of Sida's specific goals, promoting openness and democracy, because public statistics are part of the 'infrastructure' of a modern democratic society.

Key economic data rapidly released

When it comes to effectiveness, the immediate objective has also been achieved; GSO now provides timely economic data of appropriate quality.

Key economic statistics are rapidly available from GSO. They are available with a one- to two-month delay on the GSO website. The quality has been considerably improved. The price indexes have been updated with technical assistance from SCB. GSO now uses an international classification based on a commonly-used UN nomenclature. A business register developed with assistance from SCB is a valid frame for the economic surveys that include the multitude of new small enterprises. With assistance from SCB, GSO has developed its capacity to conduct sample surveys — the only practical and cost-efficient way to collect data from households as well as from small private enterprises. The project has provided assistance for gender specification of statistics and more gender-specific statistics are now produced by GSO.

The IT component has been essential for GSO's development. The technical assistance has contributed to strengthening the capacity of GSO staff and developing an IT strategy, which has saved GSO from the mistakes made by other institutions, and which is a sound basis for further development of the IT infrastructure with funds from government as well as from other donors.

In addition to training in statistical subject matters the project has contributed to English language training, which enables GSO to benefit from international sources.



The projects have supported Vietnam's transformation to a market-based economy, which, in turn, is a major cause of the economic growth responsible for most poverty reduction. Snapshot at market in Hô Chi Minh City. Photos: Miguel-Ángel Horcajada



The General Statistics Office of Vietnam now provides timely economic data of appropriate quality. The statistics reach policymakers and planners who base policies, plans and programmes on these statistics. Photo: Christopher Schroeder

All in all, GSO is now a modern statistical institution in line with the UN principles for official statistics in juridical as well as in practical terms.

The evaluation team has concluded that the positive result described cannot be attributed to the Sida-supported projects alone, but that fewer results would have been achieved without the support. Thus, the Sida-supported projects have contributed considerably to the positive results achieved.

Statistics reach policymakers and planners

With reference to impact, the development objective is implicitly defined as better management of the economy and better economic policymaking. The improved statistical information produced by GSO is, in other words, expected to contribute to decisions based on factual information. Based on interviews with stakeholders, the team has concluded that the improved statistics from GSO reach policymakers and planners, and that they base policies, plans and programmes on these statistics.

An important and partly unexpected positive effect has also been identified. The evaluation team has found that GSO has become a learning organisation in the sense that GSO has developed its ability to analyse its problems and to find solutions. GSO is also quite experienced in learning from technical advisors and from statistical institutions, adapting it to a Vietnamese context and applying it. A knowledge of English

and the IT infrastructure in place are important preconditions for this enhanced learning ability.

At the overall level, when compared to similar projects, it is the assessment of the evaluation team that Sida's support to GSO has been efficient.

Finally regarding sustainability, the GSO project steering committee has taken great care to ensure that the technical assistance has been used for capacity building. Due to this, GSO is now able to continue the use of the methods it has learned. Financial sustainability has been improved through government's increased willingness to provide resources to GSO.

Twinning is successful

One lesson to be learned is that the GSO-SCB twinning project seems to have been in line with the general experience that twinning is successful for building up professional skills in specific statistical fields.

Another lesson is that the relatively massive provision of IT equipment gave the project the possibility of establishing an overall IT strategy for GSO. The project's comprehensive approach has ensured that GSO's later investments in IT have been rational and it has saved GSO from a piecemeal and unsystematic approach to investment in IT, which has been costly to many organisations.

This text is based on Statistics Sweden's summary of a report written by an evaluation team financed by Sida.

Working miracles in Cyprus

The Director of the Statistical Service of Cyprus, Mr Pambis Philippides: 'We have managed to create a wider statistical culture among Cypriot society in general.'

Nicosia is one of the world's oldest cities. Known in ancient times as Ledra, it was the centre of an independent kingdom as early as the 7th century BC. Nicosia is the capital of Cyprus which became an independent state in 1960. The Statistical Service of Cyprus (Cystat) is located in a building that also houses the services of the Ministry of Finance, just outside Nicosia's old city walls.



Sigma was welcomed warmly by the Director of Cystat, Mr Pambis Philippides, who has devoted his entire career to statistics. He joined the Statistical Service of Cyprus in 1971, climbed in the hierarchy and was appointed Director in 1998.

The EU — a turning point

'Our vision is to produce timely and good-quality statistics to satisfy the widest range of users in Cyprus, in the EU and internationally', Mr Philippides says right from the start.

A new momentum for Cyprus statistics was created well before joining the EU, when the negotiations began in 1998. Statistics gradually became a daily reference and Cystat began to play a more important role in society. About 75 % of the statistical data produced today by Cystat are based on new demands due to EU membership, including major adjustments of previous work. Various EU projects and grants have facilitated the compliance efforts and improved Cystat's capacity to work more efficiently.

'Despite the stress experienced since then, I can say without reservation that the image of Cystat and the usefulness of statistics has been more appreciated and greatly upgraded due to the accession process and of course by joining the EU', says Mr Philippides.

The recognition of users

'In recent years, Cystat has made good progress on timeliness. We have replaced volumes of paper with timely and reliable data, Cyprus is now the first among the EU-27 to submit the earliest government deficit data to Eurostat. Today we comply almost fully with EU requirements concerning the production of harmonised statistics', says Mr Philippides.

A particular strength of Cystat is its workforce: the office has promoted good personal and professional relations among the staff and has succeeded in attracting young statisticians and economists.



'Thanks to a joint effort of all staff, we have managed to create a wider statistical culture among the Cyprus society in general, improving the coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders. Results are encouraging. It is a process of continuous improvement', he says.

As a result, the Statistical Service has a very good public image and enjoys the recognition of policymakers, government officials, the private sector, academia and the press, as reflected in the user satisfaction survey of the Cyprus statistical system conducted in summer 2006.

Focusing on timeliness of data

Cystat's dissemination policy is based on the principles of free-of-charge supply of data, quick and simultaneous release of statistics to all users, user-friendliness and comprehensiveness of information. The electronic dissemination of data, focusing on timeliness and the immediate release of data, has been a priority area in the past couple of years. The improvement has been felt and highly rated by 90 % of the users who responded to the survey. Membership of the EU has played a major role towards this release practice, given the tight submission deadlines to Eurostat.

The Cystat website remains the main source of data for most users. Recently upgraded, it is available in Greek and English, and features daily press releases, electronic reports, articles and online services such as alert e-mail whenever new data are published and an online order service. In addition anonymous micro-data are also provided to academic and other scientific institutions, for research purposes.

For lack of a full-blown press office, the publication of press releases is managed by the respective production unit, following a pre-established calendar. The contact point for questions from journalists, TV and news agencies is the Director, who also shares this role with the heads of the specific subject divisions, as needed.

'I can say without reservation that the image of Cystat and the usefulness of statistics have been more appreciated and greatly upgraded due to the accession process and of course by joining the EU', says Mr Philippides. EPA Photo / Katia Christodoulou

Small country's burden

As a small country, with a matching young and small statistical office of 145 staff, the Statistical Service of Cyprus faces several challenges. It has the same obligations as all EU Member States, both in terms of number and quality of statistics, as well as commitments concerning participation to meetings and representation vis-à-vis other Member States and international bodies.

The burden on small countries is much higher. Firstly, due to the limited human resources: the number of staff is Cystat's major problem, particularly now that Cyprus has EU obligations. Given the workload, Mr Philippides describes the job performed by the staff as a 'miracle'.

Secondly, the statistical burden on the private sector is continuous. Businesses are continuously contacted for survey data, either on a monthly or annual basis. The coverage for some of the different surveys varies between 10 000 to 15 000 enterprises, out of the total 60 000 enterprises in Cyprus.

'We would like a prioritisation and simplification of procedures for all statistical requirements and certain derogations concerning the detail and amount of data produced by small countries. Some distinction should be made in the EU depending on the size of the country and that the particularities of small countries should receive special attention when discussing technical issues.'

Pambis Philippides

Born in September 1946, Pambis Philippides graduated from London University in 1970, having completed studies in Mathematics (BSc) and Statistics (postgraduate diploma).

In 1971, he joined the (then) Department of Statistics and Research (renamed to Statistical Service of Cyprus in 2000) as a Statistics Officer. In 1985, he was promoted to the post of Senior Statistics Officer, responsible for statistics on agriculture, transport, distributive trades, as well as various other administrative issues. In July 1998, he headed the discussions for the adoption of the EU statistical *acquis*.

In December 1998, he was appointed Director of Cystat. He is a member of the National Statistical Council and member of the State Scholarships Council. He participates in and contributes to EU committees and international conferences.



The International relations team: Mr George Georgiou and Ms Maria Poupa, 'The EU accession marked a turning point. The various EU projects and grants have facilitated compliance efforts and improved our capacity to work more efficiently'.

Another proposal is to exploit the Europe first approach better. Do we really need all European statistics at national level? Could we do with some European aggregates for given sectors? Take for instance, the carriage of goods by road which is more or less a continuous survey. In Cyprus, the longest distance is 200 km, so the national weight in an overall EU figure would be negligible.

Closer cooperation within the ESS

As for the cooperation with Eurostat and other Member States, Mr Philippides would like to see more dialogue and more solidarity among Member States. Best practices and technical expertise should be shared and be made available to technically less advanced countries. Eurostat could have a great role to play, either as facilitator or as a provider of expertise.

International issues at Cystat

Sigma also met the Head of International Relations, Mr George Georgiou. He is responsible for industry and business statistics, as well as new fields such as environment, R & D and innovation, which were set up after Cyprus commenced accession negotiations to the EU.

Mr Georgiou devotes a little over 5 % of his time to international relations, mainly representing Cyprus in meetings abroad. Only in June 2006 was a young officer assigned to work exclusively on international relations and European matters, Ms Maria Poupa.

'Being employed in a small statistical office like Cystat is a mixed blessing. The blessing is the opportunity to become familiar with and to gain wide experience in various sub-

Statistical Service of Cyprus (Cystat)

The Statistical Service of Cyprus is responsible for coordinating and supporting the Cypriot statistical system and compiling almost all official statistics for Cyprus. The Central Bank and some other departments, such as the Department of Agriculture, also produce some statistics. The basic legal framework is provided by the Statistics Law of 2000, prepared on the lines of EU statistical principles and practices.

Cystat is under the Ministry of Finance but has complete

professional independence and autonomy in compiling and disseminating statistical data. The organisational structure comprises seven subject-matter divisions, each headed by a Senior Officer. Cystat is centralised in Nicosia and has three small offices in the other main towns which coordinate field survey work.

Today Cystat employs some 145 permanent staff (plus temporary staff for the survey work). 60 % of all staff are women, 86 % are statistical staff and 60 % of these are university graduates. The average age is 41 years, with 34 % being over 50 years old.

ject fields. Every day poses a new challenge. On the other hand, it is stressful and difficult to study a subject in depth, compared to when you work on a specific domain and know everything about it', Mr Georgiou says.

When asking him about the lessons learned from the accession process Mr Georgiou says: 'There is just one road. You have to check what is already in place and implement what is needed. What was very helpful during the pre-accession period was to be invited as observers to all Eurostat working groups and various multi-country pilot projects from an early stage and the on-the-job training in NSIs of various Member States. The whole office, 100 people back then, was involved in the process. In 2006, we are almost fully compliant with the basic regulations.'

'Changes brought by EU accession have been substantial, both in the statistics produced and how they are produced (methodological aspect), and in the needs of users, who now want to compare national statistics with EU data', he adds.

Crucial challenges for the future

The biggest challenge ahead for both Mr Philippides and Mr Georgiou is to change the status of the Statistical Service to full autonomy, totally independent of any ministry. The resource issues should improve with the approval of more permanent posts for Cystat and its IT system will be fully restructured as from October 2006, to bring it to the same working environment as other NSIs. In addition, although the first Cyprus Presidency of the EU is only planned for the second half of 2012, preparations should already start in order to make it a success.

Finally, Mr Philippides expresses a hope: to reach a political solution for the Cyprus issue in the near future. 'Not only for a reunited country, but also for the statistics of the whole Cyprus. Right now, the EU *acquis* is only applicable in the Government Controlled Area of the Republic of Cyprus. The statistics compiled by Cystat refer only to this part of the country, while for the other area only estimates on population can be made', he says.

A passion for social statistics



Loukia Makri has been a statistics officer in the Statistical Service of Cyprus since 2001.

Loukia studied social statistics and worked in the private sector for four years. In 2000, she applied for a post at the Statistical Service and was appointed to work in the health statistics division. The field, she explains, has been constantly evolving in recent years, requiring the transition from a national administrative data collection process to the use of multiple and complex data collection methods, the combination of different sources and the introduction of new systems and methodological tools. One major challenge expected to be faced in the near future is the introduction of EU legislation in this field.

Has the job lived up to your expectations?

'To the maximum. First, health statistics is one of my main statistical interests. Through my job I have also been able to attend several meetings and workshops abroad and have had the chance to exchange experiences and share interests with colleagues from other EU Member States.'

'I have been also involved with the coordination of EU-funded projects, in particular Phare 2002, Eurostat grants and transition facilities 2004 and 2005. This type of work has al-

lowed me to develop grant management and administrative skills and to obtain an overall idea of the work conducted in other divisions within the office.'

'In addition, the working environment in Cystat is very satisfying. Although it is a much larger service now, it still maintains its small office character and its close staff relations. The majority of statistical staff are university graduates and the average age is below 45. It is indeed a highly professional and pleasant environment to work in.'

How do you see your future in the statistical office?

'During the five years that I have worked in Cystat, I was given a lot of opportunities to enhance my academic knowledge and to enrich my work experience. I would like to be able to continue this personal growth and development in the future. I definitely see myself working in the social statistics field which is my main interest and field of study.'

'Another challenge I expect to face at personal level, is my involvement in the field of demographic statistics. This has been recently decided and it is a change that I strongly welcome, as I consider demographic statistics one of the main cornerstones of national statistics.'

What changes or improvement would you like to implement in the office?

'One of the main constraints that we currently experience is the limited number of staff in relation to national and EU needs. User needs keep increasing and certain topics are not covered at present, such as statistics on disabilities, health-care in the private sector etc. These areas will have to be tackled in the near future in order to satisfy user needs.'

'The heavy workload and tight deadlines can sometimes be an advantage since the limited number of staff has to become involved in several fields of work, thus enabling one to enrich his/her knowledge and skills. However, it can also constitute a drawback as it increases the burden and adds extra pressure on the employee in order to keep up with deadlines. Such intense time schedules clearly do not allow for in-depth specialisation in one's field of interest.'

'As a young statistician, I usually feel the need for stronger links with academia and the research world. Although there are currently some opportunities in the research field, it would be an advantage to establish relationships further between the Statistical Service and universities or other academic organisations for the production of research work. This, I believe is an issue already in the future policy plans of Cystat.'

Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, at the crossroads between Asia, Africa and Europe. Famous for its copper in antiquity, Cyprus (*Kypros* in Greek), may have even given the metal its Latin name, *cuprum*. The cult of Aphrodite, the ancient Greek mythological goddess of love and beauty flourished here.

The Republic of Cyprus gained its independence in 1960. A political crisis resulted in 1974 in a de facto partition

of the island. Although the country remains divided with the Greek Cypriots (in the south) and the Turkish (in the north), the ban on crossing to and from the south was lifted in 2003 for both communities. The population is about 766 000 in the south and an estimated 230 000 in the north. The capital Nicosia is situated on the dividing line and is itself divided.

Today the vestiges of old civilisations have left a rich heritage in the island: from ancient Greek temples to Byzantine churches and mosaics, some of which are on the Unesco Heritage List.

Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
<i>acquis communautaire</i>	The <i>acquis</i> refers to the body of existing EU legislation to be adopted by countries before they can become full members of the European Union. The statistical <i>acquis</i> refers to EU legislation in the field of statistics, but is often interpreted as including also the agreed definitions, nomenclatures, methods and questionnaires for collecting data in other statistical fields not covered by legislation and usually referred to as data collected by gentleman's agreement.
Afristat	Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa
ALA	Asia and Latin America
Asean	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAN	Andean Community
Cards	EU assistance programme for reconstruction development and stabilisation in the western Balkans
Caricom	Caribbean Community and Common Market
Cemac	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Comesca	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DFID	UK Government Department for International Development
Ecowas	Economic Community of West African States
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENP	European neighbourhood policy
ERETES	software programme for national accounts
ESA 95	European system of accounts from 1995
ESS	European statistical system
EU	European Union
Eurotrace	software programme for external trade
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Insee	French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies
Istat	Italian National Institute of Statistics
MAPS	Marrakesh Action Plan for Statistics
MDG	millennium development goal
Medstat	EU regional programme for cooperation between Euro-Mediterranean statistical institutes
Mercosur	Southern Common Market
Nafta	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSI	national statistical institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Palop	African countries of Portuguese official language
Paris21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
Phare	EU financial and technical cooperation with the countries of central and eastern Europe
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SNA 93	system of national accounts from 1993
Tacis	EU technical assistance programme for the Commonwealth of Independent States and the beneficiary countries hereof.
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP or ESCAP),
Unesco	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
Unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSC	United Nations Statistics Committee
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WAEMO	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WHO	World Health Organisation
UK	United Kingdom



Europe in figures Eurostat yearbook 2006-07 with CD-ROM

Annual, available in DE, EN, FR
2007 – 373 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm
Cat. No: KS-CD-06-001-EN-C
ISBN 92-79-02489-2
ISSN 1681-4789
Price (excluding VAT): EUR 30

This publication can be downloaded
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