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**Coordination of national statistical systems****Coordination of the national statistical system in Lithuania****Note by Statistics Lithuania***Summary*

This paper will present the experience of Statistics Lithuania with regard to the 8<sup>th</sup> United Nations Fundamental Principle “National Coordination”. The coordination role of Statistics Lithuania also involves advice on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice in other institutions compiling official statistics. This is one of the key objectives defined in “The Strategy of Statistics Lithuania 2008–2012” and one of the main principles of the quality management system introduced at Statistics Lithuania. In 2007, this quality management system was certified as conforming to the requirements of the International Standards Organization 9001 standard.

Statistics Lithuania shares its experience gained in the field of quality management with other national producers of official statistics by carrying out meetings, trainings, seminars and performing methodological consultation etc. This supports the national statistical system in the implementation of the Code of Practice and thereby envisages improvement of the quality of the statistics they provide. Statistics Lithuania discusses implementation of the Code of Practice with other national institutions, including measures taken, difficulties faced and lessons learned.

## **I. Introduction**

1. Statistics Lithuania is an institution of the government implementing a uniform State policy in the field of methodology and organization of official statistics in the country. The principal responsibilities and the rights of Statistics Lithuania are laid down in the Law on Statistics. This legal act gives Statistics Lithuania the right to coordinate the activities of other institutions managing official statistics in the field of statistics as defined in the Programme of Official Statistics.

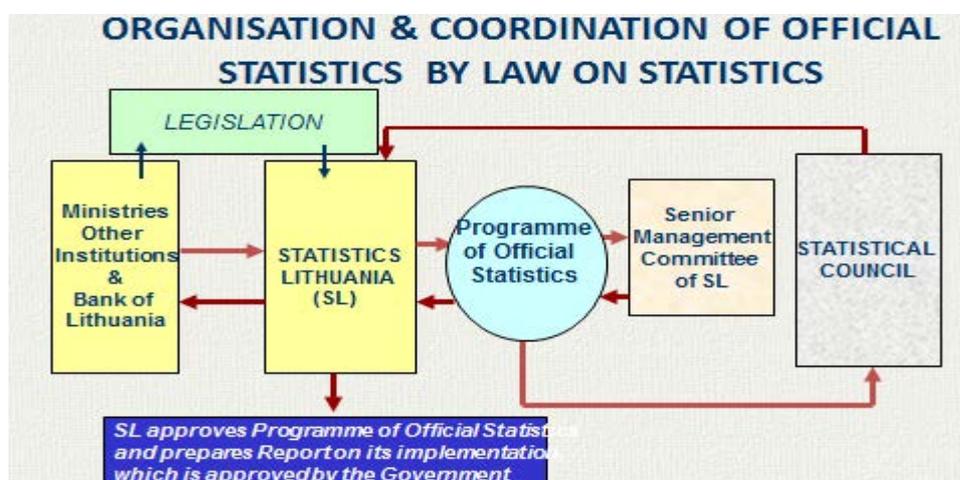
2. Quality and credibility of official statistics have become the main subjects of discussion of statistical governance in Europe. Recently issued Communication “Towards robust quality management of European Statistics (COM (2011) 211)” established a “confidence pact” by which each Member State has the responsibility to implement the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP). However, it should be noted that the National Statistical Institution (NSI) does not have enough power to implement all the measures proposed in the Communication and this further underlines the growing need for strengthening the coordination role of the institution through legal basis.

3. Coordination of official statistics in the country is one of the main functions of Statistics Lithuania (SL), regulated by the Law on Statistics which states that being an official statistical body, SL shall implement the general state policy in the fields of statistical methodology and organisation, coordinate activities of other institutions managing official statistics in production of European statistics as defined in the European Statistical Programme. Preparation of official statistics in Lithuania is partly centralised: more than 60 per cent of the country’s official statistics is prepared and presented to users by SL. Ministries and other State institutions and the Bank of Lithuania prepare, within their competence, about 40 per cent of the country’s official statistics. About half of the statistical work carried out by the above mentioned institutions is subsumed under European statistics.

## **II. Legal basis and coordination**

4. The Law on Statistics empowers SL to coordinate activities of other institutions managing official statistics in the field of statistics as defined in the Programme of Official Statistics (the Programme). This document, as provided by the Law on Statistics, is prepared and, as mandated by the Government, is approved by SL; whereas the prepared Work Programme Implementation Report (the Report) is approved by the Government. Requirements for both the Programme and the Report are described in the Law on Statistics and Working procedures, approved by Director General of SL. All works of official statistics, carried out based on the Programme have to meet uniform requirements. (Figure 1.)

Figure 1  
**Organisation and coordination of official statistics according to the Law on Statistics**



5. The Law on Statistics allows SL to systematize statistical questionnaires of other institutions, standardise them, monitor updating, harmonise statistical indicators, their definitions, etc. Therefore, other institutions managing official statistics approve statistical questionnaires, filling-in guidelines and set statistical data collection timeliness only after prior coordination with SL.

6. Possibility to exchange statistical information or data among the institutions managing official statistics within the framework of the Programme permits not to increase statistical response burden via duplication of data collection and reduce statistics production costs.

7. The coordination role is strengthened by cross-institutional working groups or commissions, e.g. Experts of National accounts, INTRASTAT and EXTRASTAT development issues, CoP implementation and etc. They include specialists of SL and other institutions managing official statistics and contribute to statistical methodology and organisational issues.

8. Thus, the legal basis for coordination of official statistics in Lithuania is in force. Based on the importance of the CoP objectives more attention should be devoted to ensuring quality and credibility of statistical information in other institutions producing official statistics.

### III. Compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice

#### A. Implementation of the Code of Practice principles in Statistics Lithuania

9. In 2002, SL introduced the quality principles in statistics. A process monitoring system was established by identifying and documenting the key and supplementary processes. The key processes include preparation of statistical information and provision of services to users, and the supplementary processes deal with management of activity and

resources. A process owner was attributed to each process, and is responsible for quality of process management and updating of documentation.

10. In 2007, the quality management system of SL was certified as meeting the ISO 9000:2000 requirements and recertified in 2010 as complying with the ISO 9001:2008 requirements.

11. The quality management system based on the ISO provides a good framework for the implementation of the CoP: management rules, structure, processes and responsibilities are clearly defined and documented, performance results are planned and pursued purposefully, quality assessment and improvement methods and tools (audits, self-assessment, quality indicators, user satisfaction surveys, etc.) are implemented in a clear and systematic way. Implementation of the ISO also helps to ensure the monitoring of implementation of the CoP via the external audits of the quality management system.

12. Currently SL as a coordinating institution fully meets almost all CoP requirements and is striving for spreading its best practices in other institutions managing official statistics.

## **B. Relationships with other institutions**

13. As mentioned above, part of official statistics in Lithuania is also managed by other institutions.

14. The regulation of statistics by EU legal acts and delivery of statistics to Eurostat were the main criteria to launch the CoP implementation in institutions managing European statistics. The cross-institutional Task Force on the CoP implementation in the national statistical system involves representatives of 14 institutions producing official statistics. The Bank of Lithuania also participates in the Task Force meetings as an observer.

15. The Task Force members were familiarized with the CoP principles and their implementation possibilities. A series of seminars were organized and conducted by SL experts.

## **C. Implementation of the Code of Practice principles in other institutions managing official statistics**

16. During 2006–2010, self-assessment was performed in all institutions. It was observed that the self-assessment questionnaire was too complicated to other institutions; thus, a simplified version was developed and in 2011 institutions repeated the exercise. This exercise allowed to analyse the situation in other institutions, identify their strengths as well as to define areas for improvement.

17. The CoP in different institutions has been implemented to a different extent:

(a) Professional independence: all institutions meet the professional independence principle;

(b) Mandate for data collection: all responding institutions have a clear legal mandate to collect statistical data (by Law on Statistics);

(c) Adequacy of resources: majority of the institutions assessed their available resources for preparation of statistics as fully adequate or adequate; however, some considered this problematic. Just 24 per cent of the institutions have divisions with the main function of preparing official statistics – other divisions also perform other functions. Only 33 per cent of employees were allocated for preparation of official statistics full-time;

(d) Quality commitment: quality of produced European Union (EU) statistics is not always regularly monitored. Procedures to solve quality issues are insufficient;

(e) Statistical confidentiality: all the institutions secure data confidentiality, incl. access to micro data for research purposes, and almost all of them have introduced data security measures;

(f) Impartiality and objectivity: not in all the institutions statistical release dates and times are pre-announced; however, all of them apply equal access to releases of statistical information at the same time;

(g) Sound methodology: institutions in preparation of statistical information are guided by European standards and guidelines; however, not all of them make methodological provisions publicly available;

(h) Appropriate statistical procedures: when using administrative data sources definitions and concepts are adjusted according to statistical purposes. Those institutions which conduct revisions, inform their users about them;

(i) Non-excessive burden on respondents: almost all the institutions apply measures to reduce the statistical response burden on enterprises; however, not all evaluate the response burden;

(j) Cost effectiveness: all the institutions use modern information technology (IT) technologies for preparation of statistics. The institutions using administrative data obtain them via automated means;

(k) Relevance: user satisfaction surveys are performed by only a few institutions;

(l) Accuracy and reliability: almost in all the institutions accuracy of primary and final statistical data is estimated; but only a few institutions have established rules, which prevent to disseminate final statistical indicators when their accuracy is insufficient;

(m) Timeliness and punctuality: a standard daily release time is set in just a few institutions. A few institutions release preliminary results of reasonable quality if they are considered useful. The advance release day for certain institutions is only available in the Programme of Official Statistics;

(n) Coherence and comparability: all the institutions apply standard concepts and classifications to ensure coherence and consistency;

(o) Accessibility and clarity: almost all prepared statistical information is available on websites of relevant institutions; however, information on metadata and quality is available only in a few websites.

#### **D. Coordination and monitoring of implementation of Code of Practice principles in other institutions managing official statistics**

18. All institutions managing official statistics adequately cooperate with SL in the CoP implementation. In accordance with the self-assessment results, other institutions prepare the CoP implementation Action plans which are annually revised, and a progress report on the implementation of the plans and new actions defined. SL compiles the summary progress report, which is presented and discussed in the cross-institutional Task Force.

19. Relevant trainings or seminars on quality characteristics evaluation, statistical production process monitoring, statistical data analysis and editing are organized for other institutions managing official statistics (to work individually with each institution and to involve their staff on a larger scale).

## **IV. Identified problems and projected improvements**

### **A. Problems identified**

20. In some institutions preparation of official statistics is not the main function; therefore, one could draw the conclusion that it is complicated to evaluate both the official statistics preparation costs and efficiency. Sometimes implementation of all the CoP provisions causes certain difficulties. Also, SL does not have enough power to influence implementation of one or another CoP principle and this further underlines the growing need for strengthening the coordinating role of SL to be grounded on the legal basis.

21. Other legal acts of the country, regulating the state management structure and domains, do not permit to influence the institutional environment, adequacy of resources for production of statistics, competence of staff and to assess cost-effectiveness, etc.

22. Each institution has internal procedures for organisation of activities, development of legal acts, internal auditing and quality assurance mechanisms as well as dissemination of information systems.

23. The institutions release not only official statistical information on their websites, but also information relevant for administration purposes and needed for decision-making in certain domains of their activity; thus, users are facing difficulties to differentiate, which statistics are part of official statistics and which should comply with the CoP requirements and standards.

### **B. Projected improvements**

24. Cooperation of the institutions managing official statistics will be promoted at both professional and managerial levels.

25. Taking into consideration replies submitted by other institutions to the CoP implementation questionnaire, SL identified possible improvements:

(a) Statistical information production and quality monitoring process should be documented in all the institutions;

(b) Regular quality monitoring procedures should be applied for all produced European statistics;

(c) A uniform advance release calendar of official statistics should be prepared and made publicly available;

(d) More metadata: methodology, quality characteristics and quality reports should be available to users;

(e) The response burden should be also estimated by other institutions;

(f) User satisfaction surveys should be conducted and relevance of statistical information should be estimated by all the institutions;

(g) Procedures to estimate accuracy and reliability of statistical indicators should be developed.

26. The already developed draft Law on Statistics will strengthen the SL's coordination role.

27. In view of dissemination, SL intends to better inform users on statistics produced by and available from other producers of official statistics. The Portal of Official Statistics is

under development to facilitate availability of the uniform release calendar of official statistics with direct access to metadata and statistical information from all producers of official statistics.

## V. Conclusions

28. Currently, the key obstacle to oblige other institutions to implement the CoP is the absence of legal basis: thus, the CoP implementation in other institutions is based on their good-will and long-established cooperation. The CoP implementation results are better achieved with regular self-assessment, evaluation and cooperation of the NSI and other institutions in place. Therefore, the revision of the Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics, whereof one of the aims is clarifying the coordinating role of NSIs, is strongly supported.

29. SL highly appreciates the revision of the CoP and development of the ESS Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) performed by the Sponsorship on Quality formed on the Eurostat's initiative, which facilitates the CoP implementation not only in NSI's, but also in other institutions producing official statistics.

30. International events, conferences, Working Groups and seminars on quality issues contribute to the CoP awareness-raising and strengthening its importance for other institutions managing official statistics.

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