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**EXPERIENCE IN COORDINATION WITHIN THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL
STATISTICAL SYSTEM**

Supporting paper submitted by National Institute of Statistics, Bulgaria

INTRODUCTION

1. According to the Law on Statistics, the Bulgarian NSI is responsible for coordination of the national statistical activities within the country. The main reasons for coordination of the National Statistical System are as follows:

- transition from centralized to decentralized system;
- necessity to provide comparable statistical information about phenomena and processes in time and space by using a unified statistical infrastructure - classifications, nomenclatures, indicators, data collection approaches;
- elimination of duplication when collecting data from respondents and reducing the respondent's burden;
- strengthening confidence in the National Statistical System by applying unified standards and approaches of information dissemination.

TOOLS FOR COORDINATION

2. The coordination is performed in all processes of the statistical activities – from planning to dissemination.

3. The coordination tools are:

- The National Programme for Statistical Surveys (NPSS);
- Statistical infrastructure: classifications, registers, indicators; dissemination;

- Councils (National Statistical Council, High Statistical Council, Methodological Council, Editing Council, Methodology and Training Council, IT Council;)
- Agreements with Bodies of statistics and other institutions, protocols, rules and ordinances.

National Programme for Statistical Surveys

4. According to the Law on Statistics, NPSS is adopted annually by the Council of Ministers, upon a proposal made by the NSI President. The NPSS covers statistical information required for observation and compilation of the Bulgarian economic, demographic, social and environmental activities, taking into account the availability of sources, respondents burden and cost-effectiveness principle. The NPSS provides detailed information on the three partners of the statistical activities – users, respondents and statisticians.

5. The NPSS includes two parts: the plan for the NSI statistical surveys and surveys with inter-institutional significance. It covers permanently conducted statistical surveys with established public significance, specific statistical surveys for the reference year and surveys related to the international obligations. Exhaustive censuses are conducted according to specific laws.

6. The NPSS contains detailed characteristics of the surveys in terms of theme, content, object, method of conduct, sources and form of data collection; body/bodies conducting the survey; obligation for data provision and budget of the survey. Funds needed for the NPSS implementation are provided from the State Budget. A powerful budgetary tool to ensure coordination is to estimate the budget for the total statistical activities in the country and to give the coordinators the power to allocate this budget regarding priorities, quality and respondents' burden. The NPSS is published in the Official Gazette, thus implementing the principle of transparency.

7. According to the Law on Statistics, the President of the NSI submits the Annual report on the activity of the NSI to the Council of Ministers and the report on implementation of the National Programme for Statistical Surveys for the preceding year.

Statistical Infrastructure

8. The Law on Statistics also provides a suitable legal basis for coordination, including mandatory use of the national statistical and information systems and registers, classifications, nomenclatures and methods, approved by the NSI President.

Classifications and Nomenclatures

9. In order to achieve harmonization of the statistical infrastructure with the requirements of the EU legislation, the following European and international classifications and nomenclatures have been implemented:

- Bulgarian economic activity classification in conformity with the NACE Rev.1;
- National product classification by activity in compliance with CPA;
- National PRODCOM nomenclatures, compatible with PRODCOM list;
- Bulgarian classification of types on construction;
- Combined Nomenclature adopted by the customers;

- Unified classification of administrative and territorial units;
- Classification of territorial units for statistical purposes (NUTS);
- COICOP;
- COFOG;
- COPNI;
- COPP;
- Classification of education;
- Classification of occupation ISCO'99;
- Classification of accidents at work;
- International Classification of diseases.

Registers

10. According to the Law on Statistics, NSI has to establish and maintain the following registers:

- Register of the Statistical Units;
- National Registers of Settlements;
- Unified Register for identification of farmers, self-employed persons and other persons.

Following the EU recommendations, draft amendments of the Law on Statistics have been prepared, taking out the Unified Register for identification of economic and other subjects carrying out activities on the territory of the country (BULSTAT - administrative register) in a separate Law.

Indicators

11. At present, a full methodological description is available for almost all indicators (input and output) and it has been disseminated. The main objective is to develop a user-oriented system of indicators, which will support the processes of planning, design, collection, processing, storage and dissemination of data.

Dissemination

12. NSI dissemination policy is oriented towards more efficient use of electronic technologies. Main user groups are: government, business, academic, research institutions, non-profit entities and citizens.

13. Market research is a very important direction to meet users' needs. A number of positive and negative aspects of NSI performance could emerge. An effective statistical data dissemination is the best kind of marketing.

14. Rules for dissemination of statistical information, products and services have been prepared, taking into account the principle of statistical confidentiality. The statistical dissemination objectives are:

- statistics should promote democracy by informing citizens about the developments in society;
- statistics should assist the public and private enterprises in their decision-making, using an effective information service;

- statistical data should be accessible to the academic, researchers and non-profit institutions.

15. Updating and further improvement of the NSI website is an important direction in developing the dissemination of statistical data and metadata. The NSI website permits the publishing and updating of:

- the yearly calendar for presenting the results of the statistical surveys;
- the Law on Statistics and secondary legal acts;
- catalogue of statistical publications;
- results of statistical surveys;
- press releases.

16. Bulgaria formalized its subscription to the IMF's SDDS on 1 December 2003 and became the 55th country to subscribe. The three compiling institutions - NSI, Bulgarian National Bank and Ministry of Finance - are responsible for the regular updating of the information posted on the website of the Bulgarian National Bank.

17. NSI has signed agreements for the exchange of information with 20 public administration institutions. About one hundred additional requests from different users are completed annually.

Councils

18. The High Statistical Council is a consultative body to the NSI President, which gives opinions and recommendations on the NSI plan for statistical surveys, drafts of legislative instruments in the field of statistics, national statistical standards, national classifications, nomenclatures and methods. The Council consists of 35 members – well-known experts in the field of statistical theory and practice, as well as representatives of main users of statistical information.

19. The National Statistical Council is a body attached to the NSI President and is responsible for drafting the NPSS. It consists of 16 members. The National Statistical Council adopts the long-term strategy for development of statistical activities and approves a list of structural units of the public administration, to be considered as Bodies of statistics, as well as the rules of their activities. The list is posted on the NSI website.

20. The Methodological council is a body responsible for implementation of the principles of statistical activities, incorporated in the Law on Statistics - impartiality, reliability, effectiveness, adequacy, publicity and confidentiality. This Council is in charge of development of methodology, statistical data collection, processing, analysing and storage of statistical information. The Council consists of 15 members – 5 from the NSI and the others from scientific, research institutions, NGO-s and the government sector.

21. **National Strategy for Development of Statistics** for the period 2000-2006 has been elaborated by NSI in close cooperation with other Bodies of statistics. Basic parts of the strategy are:

- Nature and characteristics of the statistical system;
- Review of the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

- Problems and measures,
- Objectives, tasks and priority areas;
- Organization, functions and resources.

The strategy is a basic programme document with a supra-institutional character, related to planning and priority setting of statistical activities.

22. A **Medium-term Programme for Development of Statistics, 2003-2006** has been elaborated by NSI, discussed by the High Statistical Council and adopted by the National Statistical Council. The programme outlines:

- Strategic guidelines for development of the National Statistical System - mission, vision, values, fundamental tasks, policies, programmes, concrete surveys and activities, legal basis, planning, basic management principles, interrelations between users, Bodies of statistics and respondents, results;
- Programme for development of statistics until 2006;
- Statistical data support to the EU accession process by policies;
- Work schedule on priority tasks;
- Resources.

The Programme provides for each policy a detailed description of the main tasks to achieve compliance with the *acquis communautaire*.

Statistics About Statistics

23. The new Performance indicators system, following the philosophy of the Statistical Capacity Building Indicators (PARIS 21 Task Team) considers 7 dimensions:

- Effectiveness and usefulness;
- Resources - staff, budget, infrastructure;
- Transparency;
- Timeliness;
- Accuracy and relevance;
- Respondents' burden;
- International cooperation.

For all selected indicators the focus lies on:

- the data availability review (including identification of the data gaps) and data quality;
- the possibility to produce time sequences (in order to be able to show trends over time).

Respondents' Burden

24. The work on reducing respondents' burden is connected with: reducing the volume of collected information; improvement of the organization and coordination of data collection; optimization of the indicators' number and periodicity of statistical surveys; and usage of electronic questionnaires.

25. Reducing the respondents' burden is going to be achieved in the future by:

- thorough analysis and balance of the users' needs and respondents' burden;
- using simpler statistical forms (questionnaires, inquiries, verifications);
- searching alternative data sources;
- changing from exhaustive to sample surveys and formation of smaller samples (where it is possible) in the representative surveys;

- sending and receiving information through the Internet;
- synchronization of the schedules of the different producers of statistical information

Coordination and Quality

26. Quality of the statistical activities is a strategic task of the National Statistical System. Improvement of quality is related to implementation of international statistical standards, as well as to increasing confidence in the statistical activities.
27. NSI aims to bring the national statistical surveys in line with the EU requirements in all fields of statistics and to implement quality reports in production and dissemination of statistical information.
28. Methodological work is ongoing on quality indicators, worked out by the Eurostat Special Group on quality indicators by components – applicability, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, comparability and coordination.
29. The readiness to join the principles of the ESS Quality Declaration has been reviewed. A component on quality has been included in the project under the National PHARE Programme 2002.
30. The issues of quality are increasingly related to horizontal matters like strategic management, management of human resources, and marketing of statistical products. The Total Quality Management approach has been discussed recently during a special workshop with partners from DESTATIS.

Agreements with Bodies of Statistics

31. In addition to the above-mentioned Agreements for exchange of information between NSI and other institutions, permanent inter-institutional task forces are functioning in order to coordinate the activity and the usage of administrative data for statistical purposes (e. g. Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environment and Waters, Ministry of Health).
32. Permanent inter-institutional working groups are functioning on concrete thematic issues such as elaboration of financial accounts, poverty survey, elaboration of national set of indicators on sustainable development, external migration survey, foreign trade statistics.
33. Different types of training are used for improving the National Statistical System staff qualification – training courses, seminars, studying best practices, traineeships at Eurostat and EU Member States.

Cooperation and Coordination

34. In the framework of the coordination mechanism (WG 12 “Statistics”), NSI continues to coordinate the activities on approximation of the national legislation in statistics to the *acquis communautaire*.
35. A number of projects under the different PHARE programmes (Multibeneficiary and

National) are successfully under implementation involving representatives from the other Bodies of statistics.

36. The role and significance of the European Statistical System were broadly presented to the main actors of the National Statistical System during a special in-country course.

CONCLUSION

37. As a coordinator of the National Statistical System, NSI will continue to provide the international organizations with national statistical data. In the future, the role of NSI as coordinator of official statistics will increase by improving the organization, developing processes and products in order to better satisfy users' needs.

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