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Topic (iii): Resource management in statistical offices and the role of the IT departments

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION
OF STATISTICAL DATA**

Submitted by the National Statistical Institute of Albania¹

CONTRIBUTED PAPER

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The statistical service has been, is and will always be one of the main users of information technology. In the past, however, this integrated category of services was known under a different name. Information Technology (IT) is the technology that is used to receive, store, process and disseminate information via electronic means such as radio, television, telephone, computers, etc.. As the definition implies, the concept of IT is very broad. We will focus only on some aspects that cover computer usage. As in any other field, IT is dominated by man who has created the means and the applications through which the use of these means is made possible.

¹ Prepared by Dhimiter Tole.

II. THE USE OF IT IN OUR STATISTICAL SERVICE

2. In order to analyze some aspects of the use of IT, we collected information via a questionnaire that was completed by the statistical units of: the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Affairs, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, Ministry of Labor and some General Directories.

II.1 The structure

3. Almost all the institutions that were subjected to our survey include statistical units either as separate units or as sub-units of other sectors. Most of the institutions include sub-units that function as statistical authorities.

II.2 The specialists

4. The number of specialists in each of the above-mentioned institutions is limited from 1 to 3. The statistical unit of the Ministry of Agriculture has a greater number of specialists.

II.3 Computers

5. The computers that are used in the public statistical system are mostly Personal Computers (PC), compatible with IBM. The availability of computers is satisfactory. Most of the institutions use Pentium II with a RAM memory and hard disc capacity which suffice for the amount of information and the software that are being processed. The general directory of the National Statistical Institute of Albania (INSTAT) and the regional directories use a network of 100 computers, of which 30 are Pentium I and the rest Pentium II. The survey showed that the specialists of the Ministry of Agriculture use computers of an earlier production. In general, the computers are not connected to a local network, with the exception of INSTAT which has a NOVELL network of 50 users, the Ministry of Education and the General Customs Directory. At first glance the computer "park" seems relatively new, but funds for its physical renovation have to be allocated within the next three years because of the expected moral depreciation of computers.

II.4 Direction softwares

6. Operational systems include the whole range of Windows, from 3.11 up to NT, but Windows 98 is the dominant system.

II.5 Application softwares

7. The most widely used software is EXCEL, the 97 version. It is used by statistics specialists who make use of the bifunctionality of this software: data processing and graph insertion.

8. In the category of database software, ACCESS bought within the Microsoft Office lot is used by INSTAT, the Ministry of Education and Science and the General Customs Directory. The use of software specialized in statistical processing is limited to INSTAT, which uses SPSS. The Ministry of Agriculture uses a program that has been especially designed for the editing and tabulation of data. INSTAT uses PageMaker and Corel Draw for the publication of materials, whereas the other institutions do not use specialized software for this purpose.

II.6 Communication

9. Telephone, fax, modem and e-mail are some of the main methods of communication. All the statistical units collect information from the sub-units according to the respective field. In our survey we did not observe the transmission standards and the amount of data; we referred only to the qualitative aspect of this process. The frequency of data collection is generally monthly, quarterly and yearly. The data is usually presented on paper and in several cases it is saved on diskettes. In general, no modems have been installed and used for data collection except for the one installed in the Ministry of Education and Science. Recently INSTAT has installed and made functional a modem which enables the transmission of data from Eurostat. The use of Electronic Mail is also limited to Eurostat and very few other units.

II.7 Publication/dissemination

10. The dissemination of statistical data is based on the principle that all users should have equal and simultaneous access to these data. In this respect, in the current situation, Internet is the fastest and the most convenient method of data transmission. The current situation in the statistical service: the survey indicates that except for INSTAT, Internet is not being used for data dissemination. INSTAT is in the first steps of this contemporary data diffusion practice. Recently, INSTAT has created a web page through which the data are disseminated.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. The actual economic development of the country defines at the same time the development of statistics and information technology. In comparison with candidate states for the European Union, Albania has a long way to go.

12. The role of statistical service in public institutions must be strengthened. For this purpose the number of specialists must be increased and further steps toward their qualification must be taken.

13. Central public institutions should define a long-term policy in the development of IT in general, and of the IT specialized in the statistical service.

14. The IT Department of INSTAT, in cooperation with the other departments of INSTAT, should strengthen the connections with statistical sectors in public institutions in order to increase the communication level.

15. INSTAT should accelerate its rhythm in terms of creating a client-oriented database for data diffusion.

ANNEX

THE SURVEY

PUBLIC INSTITUTION _____

STATISTICAL UNIT

Separate 1. Yes 2. No

Specialists []

COMPUTER

PC: Pentium I ___ Ram ___ HD ___

PC: Pentium II ___ Ram ___ HD ___

PC: Pentium III ___ Ram ___ HD ___

SOFTWARE

Direction: Win 3.11 Win 95 Win 98 Win NT Other

Kind : Excel: _____ Lotus: _____ Other: _____

Database: Access: _____ Paradox: _____ Other: _____

Statistical: SPSS: _____ Other: _____

Publication: Pagemaker: _____ Corel: _____ Other: _____

COMMUNICATION

International : E-mail (1. Yes / 2. No)

National: Modem (1. Yes / 2. No)

Website: 1. Yes / 2. No

MICRODATA

Collects data from the subunits (1. Yes / 2. No)

If Yes:

Number of subunits that provide data: []

Method of collection:

0. No / 1. Administrative / 2. Survey

Method of information preservation:

0. No / 1. Paper / 2. Computerized

Frequency of collection of voluminous information:

0. No / 1. Monthly / 2. Quarterly / 3. Yearly

Frequency of data processing

0. No / 1. Monthly / 2. Quarterly / 3. Yearly

Publication:

0. No / 1. Monthly / 2. Quarterly / 3. Yearly