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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 Albania ¹

CONTRIBUTED PAPER

SUMMARY

1. The statistical service is one of the main users of information technology. In order to analyze the use of IT in the Albanian statistical service, the National Statistical Institute of Albania (INSTAT) 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.

2. Almost all the institutions that were subject 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. 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 more specialists.

¹ Prepared by Dhimiter Tole.

3. The computers 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 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.

4. Operational systems include the whole range of Windows, from 3.11 up to NT, but Windows 98 is the dominant system. The most widely used application software is Excel97. It is used by statisticians for data processing and preparation of graphs. As database software, Microsoft Access is used by INSTAT, the Ministry of Education and Science and the General Customs Directory. The use of special statistical software is limited to INSTAT, which uses SPSS. The Ministry of Agriculture uses a program that has been specially 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.

6. Telephone, fax, modem and e-mail are 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 annual. 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 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.

7. 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 survey indicates that except for INSTAT, Internet is not used for data dissemination. INSTAT is making the first steps in this contemporary data dissemination practice and recently created a web page through which the data are disseminated.

8. The actual economic development of the country defines the development of statistics and information technology. In comparison with candidate countries for the European Union, Albania has a long way to go. Some conclusions and recommendations for the future:

- the role of the statistical service in public institutions must be strengthened. For this purpose the number of specialists must be increased and their qualification improved;
- central public institutions should define a long-term policy in the development of IT in general, and of the specialized IT in the statistical service;
- the IT Department of INSTAT, in cooperation with the other departments, should strengthen the connections with statistical sectors in public institutions;
- INSTAT should accelerate the creation of a client-oriented database for data dissemination.