EUROPEAN
STATISTICAL
SYSTEM

PEER REVIEW REPORT

ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN STATISTICS CODE OF
PRACTICE AND FURTHER IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

LATVIA

Marko Krištof
Karin Blix
Danièle Lamarque
Gorja Bartsch

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Statistics Law (2015/118.3) establishes the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (internationally known as Statistics Latvia) as the leading institution of the National Statistical System in Latvia. Statistics Latvia has a long-established position as the producer of independent statistical data. The Statistics Law ensures the professional independence of Statistics Latvia, provides access to all data sources and provides an administrative framework, which obliges all respondents to provide data requested by national statistical authorities.

The National Statistical System in Latvia is relatively centralised, with Statistics Latvia producing a large majority of European statistics and seven Other National Authorities responsible for the rest. Statistics Latvia has efficiently developed coordination within the National Statistical System by setting up a strong framework that organises its relations with the Other National Authorities.

Statistics Latvia is a functionally centralised institution with a main office in Riga and three data collection centres in the regions. The peer review team was left with the impression that Statistics Latvia produces excellent value for money, as it is continuously seeking efficiency gains. Although the use of human and IT resources is efficient and aimed at delivering quality services to all its users, financial constraints may reduce the ability of Statistics Latvia to adapt to new challenges.

The peer review team's interviews with various stakeholders confirmed that Statistics Latvia is widely regarded as a reliable organisation, and the statistics it produces are well-received by the media and society as a whole. Statistics Latvia promotes an open culture and emphasises transparency in all its operations. It is easily approachable by users, encourages them to ask questions and seek information, and maintains positive relationships with them. Additionally, Statistics Latvia demonstrates a willingness to address sensitive issues and provide accurate information, even in the face of public criticism, thereby contributing to the establishment of a trustworthy National Statistical System. Collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and expertise are fostered within Statistics Latvia, creating a team spirit that is crucial to its strength. The staff's dedication to delivering high-quality products and services is supported by excellent internal communication.

The quality management system of Statistics Latvia is built around the European statistics Code of Practice, the Generic Statistical Business Process Model and ISO 9001 and consists of documents and tools functioning as the management system of the organisation. The IT security management system is based on ISO 27001. The peer review team believes that Latvia has a resilient and adaptable National Statistical System. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when Statistics Latvia proved its capacity to adapt to the situation and quickly reorganise its processes accordingly. Statistics Latvia also continually follows new and emerging trends in data collection and analysis and produces tailor-made analyses and experimental statistics.

Strong and active partnerships are held with academia, especially with 4 of the 52 public and private higher education institutions (of which 19 universities) present in Latvia, and also through an academic network with other Baltic countries. Easy access to Statistics Latvia's library, information publicised on the internet and use of microdata are highly appreciated and considered valuable inputs for supporting university courses and feeding research programmes.

There is a central portal for official statistics in the National Statistical System of Latvia. The aim is for all of Latvia's official statistics to be published on this website. From the official statistics portal, visualisation tools and charts can be embedded into other websites.

Overall, there is a high level of compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice throughout the National Statistical System in Latvia. However, the peer review team identified 19 recommendatins, two of them compliance-relevant and seventeen improvement-related, grouped under five headings and listed below with their related explanations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Strengthening the institutional environment

The Statistical Council was established in 2016 as an advisory body to facilitate cooperation between statistical authorities, respondents and users and to enhance the production of official statistics (Section 9 of the Statistics Law). The composition of the Council, with a majority of members from government institutions, and its chairmanship, held from the beginning by the Director General of Statistics Latvia, does not ensure the necessary openness and does not strengthen the Council's independence. The peer review team believes that more diverse backgrounds in the membership composition would open new topics of discussion at Council meetings, while the appointment of an external person of high public standing as chair would enrich the Council by bringing an additional voice to official statistics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

1. The relevant authorities should develop and implement strategies to strengthen the influence of the Statistical Council, starting with a reassessment of its membership to ensure greater diversity of user representatives and consideration of the possibility of an external chairperson. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

The previous peer review report stated that the Cabinet of Ministers approves both the Official Statistics Programme and the content of questionnaires, which cannot be considered an example of good practice. However, the new Statistics Law has not resolved this issue. Statistics Latvia explained that, in the Latvian legislative system, obligations to third parties could only be issued by the Cabinet of Ministers or Parliament. Therefore, both the Official Statistics Programme and questionnaires are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Even though the approval of the Official Statistics Programme by the government and/or the Parliament is not uncommon in the EU Member States, it seems that approval of the content of questionnaires by the Cabinet of Ministers is unique to Latvia. Although the adoption process for all acts of the government is transparent and Statistics Latvia has assured the peer review team that no interventions in the content of questionnaires have been recorded, the peer review team believes that this is a potential risk which needs to be addressed, as it has a huge potential to threaten the professional independence of Statistics Latvia.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

2. Statistics Latvia should reflect on the possible negative aspects of the existing system in which the Cabinet of Ministers approves the content of questionnaires and, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, discuss, identify and implement specific proposals aimed at increasing the professional independence of Statistics Latvia. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.4 and 1.3)

Two of the three Other National Authorities that took part in the peer review have very limited resources available for fulfilling their role and implementing European standards, in particular in the area of metadata and dissemination. Staff involved in the production of European statistics often have other main tasks to fulfil and cannot rely on appropriate infrastructure and tools for the adequate dissemination of European statistics. The peer review team considers that such cases would benefit from a re-assessment of the division of tasks between Statistics Latvia and the Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating European statistics, to optimise resources and ensure high standards for the production and dissemination of European statistics.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

3. Statistics Latvia, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, should review and adjust the setup of the National Statistical System related to the division of work between Statistics Latvia and the Other National Authorities with limited access to resources for the production and dissemination of European statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Given the rapidly changing landscape of the national digital infrastructure and the increasing dependence on the availability and quality of administrative data, statistical offices are embracing new, more active roles within their national data ecosystems. Due to different legal and administrative systems and practices, there is no universal approach to determining the role of the National Statistical Institute within the national data ecosystem. The peer review team encourages Statistics Latvia to reflect on its future role in the national data ecosystem and to carefully consider the potential harms and benefits from multiple viewpoints, while also bearing in mind its aims, resources and potential future income from an extended scope of work.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

4. Statistics Latvia should reflect on its future role in the national data ecosystem and discuss and implement its proposals in cooperation with the relevant authorities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.7, 1bis.1 and 2.4)

The three Other National Authorities that took part in the peer review had not yet moved their official statistics to the official statistics portal, and two of them did not have information in English on their website. Their statistics were not easily accessible and had limited reference metadata attached. There was no publication calendar, and the treatment of errors was not transparent. The peer review team also learned of pre-release access that was not well-justified, controlled and publicised. As these issues may also apply to the Other National Authorities not taking part in the peer review, it could be beneficial to approach all Other National Authorities to review compliance with the ES CoP in areas such as dissemination, metadata, error correction and pre-release access arrangements.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

5. Statistics Latvia should review the compliance of the Other National Authorities with the ES CoP thoroughly and work with them to ensure compliance with the ES CoP in areas where this is not the case, such as metadata, dissemination, pre-release access arrangements and error correction. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)

Even though the pre-release access granted by Statistics Latvia is formally organised according to the ES CoP, the peer review team identified additional cases of pre-release access that are not publicised in the dissemination policy. Apart from the access granted to officials from the Ministry of Economics, the peer review team identified regular pre-release to a news agency, one case of pre-release to an association and revelation of the general trends of the statistical releases before dissemination to ministries not listed in the dissemination policy.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

6. Statistics Latvia should review its arrangements for non-publicised pre-release access to the government and other users, which conflict with the principle of impartiality. If pre-release access is to be retained, Statistics Latvia must ensure that it is limited, well-justified, controlled, and publicised. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 6.7)

II. Ensuring adequate resources

Statistics Latvia faces financial constraints, impeding its capacity to fulfil its duties satisfactorily and adapt to new challenges. The peer review team considers that additional resources are vital to raise wages of all employees. It is necessary to ensure that all staff receive at least the minimum wage, and that top-level experts are paid close to the maximum point of the public sector wage scale to comply with civil service regulations, cope with increasing inflation and offer attractive compensations for hiring high-profile and specialised staff. The peer review team also considers that looking for recruits with various academic backgrounds and with skill sets broader than those traditionally sought by Statistics Latvia for vacant positions could encourage more candidates to apply and stimulate knowledge exchange. Relying on its sound management and budgetary arrangements, Statistics Latvia also has the capacity to increase the scope and pricing of paid services transparently and efficiently.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

7. Statistics Latvia should intensify its efforts to obtain more funding from the government, and through paid services, to enable more competitive compensation for all categories of staff and attract and retain employees, and should also consider a broader skill set for vacant positions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia has repeatedly alerted the Ministry of Economics to its financial needs in order to adapt to new strategic, technical, human and professional challenges. Delivering high-quality statistics and providing reliable data to decision-makers, relevant stakeholders and the public at large requires adequate resources. Additional funding is necessary to support the adoption of new technologies, maintain and increase professional excellence in human resources, and develop communication

toward a wider range of users. If Statistics Latvia is expected to continue its rapid modernisation and fulfil its potential as an innovative statistics producer, increased budgetary funding will be necessary.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

8. The relevant authorities should increase budgetary funding for Statistics Latvia, taking into account the need to further increase the value that official statistics provide to society, to promote and use new data sources for the production of official statistics, and to reach a wider range of users. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia reports difficulties in attracting highly qualified specialists, largely due to uncompetitive wages. Sources of concern include the staff turnover rate, the rate of vacancies and increasing difficulty in hiring new staff: competitions for posts are advertised several times, but the application rate is low, and recruitment may last several months. Notwithstanding the need for financial solutions to cope with these constraints, Statistics Latvia can also strengthen its human resources management through external communication and internal training and mobility policies.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

9. Statistics Latvia should develop active human resource management and promote itself as a desirable place to work, e.g. through social media, to become more attractive in the labour market. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

The planned reform of the state administrative data infrastructure, which includes the creation of federated data centres, could complicate the planning process for Statistics Latvia. Even though, from a ministry's perspective, moving to a data centre may seem like a viable solution, there are potential risks and uncertainties to consider. For example, it may not be cheaper to move to a data centre, and the issue of licensing costs remains unclear. Moreover, the experience of other institutions shows that technical problems at data centres are not always solved quickly, which could impact the operations of Statistics Latvia significantly. Given the critical nature of official statistics, any disruption or delay in operations could have serious consequences for the organisation, its stakeholders and Latvian international obligations.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

10. Statistics Latvia should prepare a document assessing the long-term harms and benefits associated with a potential migration from its data servers to the federated data centre and analysing the effects on the confidentiality of sensitive data, costs and availability of storage for future use of new data sources, and potentially present it to the relevant authorities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 5.5 and 3.1)

III. Improving statistical processes

Over the past years, Statistics Latvia has successfully reduced the response burden through the use of administrative and other data sources, sampling techniques and electronic data collection systems for enterprises. The peer review team considers that a regular quantification and publication of the

evolution of the response burden, which is currently lacking, could prove the effectiveness of Statistics Latvia's measures in this regard and promote it as a modern and innovative state institution.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

11. Statistics Latvia should promote how it reduced the response burden over time, and better use the results in negotiations with the government authorities and data providers. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 9.2)

As the National Statistical System of Latvia is faced with limited resources and increasing user needs for new and more timely information, the peer review team considers that the full potential of new data sources is yet to be exploited. Apart from using administrative data wherever possible, Statistics Latvia has started cooperating with a number of private data holders to obtain data for official or experimental statistics. Regarding private data holders, the peer review team sees an opportunity to enhance and broaden the relationships, and to demonstrate the value added of using such data for statistical purposes. Where obstacles to accessing and using new data sources exist at national level, Statistics Latvia should engage more actively with the relevant government services and data holders to identify win-win solutions.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

12. Statistics Latvia should continue to explore and capitalise on the opportunities to use new data sources to reduce the response burden, improve timeliness, increase efficiency and produce new statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 10.3, 9.4, 9.3 and 9.5)

Statistics Latvia has already introduced the Single Integrated Metadata Structure in the organisation although it is yet to be fully implemented. By expanding the Quality Management System with a comprehensive metadata system, all quality reporting could be enhanced by using the Single Integrated Metadata Structure in one common metadata system, with the possibility of selecting the relevant fields needed for different reporting obligations from the Single Integrated Metadata Structure. This could lead to a reduced overall documentation burden for statistical producers and coherent reporting to both international and national users. If such a system also introduces guidance on how to complete the Single Integrated Metadata Structure for all statistical products, it can contribute to reduced vulnerability, automate the processes and report on important quality indicators such as accuracy and comparability.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

13. Statistics Latvia should develop a comprehensive metadata system that can provide an overview of all reference metadata including classifications, concepts and documentation of statistical products. The system should introduce guidance on how to complete the Single Integrated Metadata Structure for all statistical products. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.4, 15.1 and 15.5)

IV. Improving accessibility of statistical releases

Although Statistics Latvia is a well-respected public institution that actively communicates through all available channels, the peer review team was left with the impression that public reactions to criticism

and misuse, in the most important cases, depend on the decision of the Director General, who has extensive experience that allows correct assessments of cases in which public reaction is necessary. For the future, the peer review team suggests that Statistics Latvia should establish a systematic approach to public reactions, based on a documented procedure.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

14. Statistics Latvia should further develop its procedures regarding public reactions to criticism and misuse and implement a more active stance on public reactions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.7)

A procedure for the correction of errors is described in the Statistics Latvia Quality Management System. When errors are discovered in disseminated statistics, there are procedures to correct them as soon as possible. There is a notification when the corrections are made, but details of the corrections are not transparent to users and the corrections are not highlighted in the dissemination calendar.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

15. Statistics Latvia should improve the procedures related to corrections of errors to make changes more transparent to users. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 6.3)

Statistics Latvia maintains and publishes an interactive advance dissemination calendar for the entire National Statistical System on the common official statistical portal. The calendar is well-designed and provides an easy way for users to view forthcoming publications and access recently released data. When deviations occur, users are informed, and the new release date is set in the release calendar. Even though the previous release dates are available under the rescheduled tab, information about reasons for deviation is not available.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

16. Statistics Latvia should provide information on the changes to publication dates and reasons for any deviation. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 13.4)

Statistics Latvia offers paid services and the preparation of custom-designed analyses for statistics that are not part of the Official Statistics Programme and in many instances are not published on the official statistics portal. The peer review team believes that transparency in respect of the nature and volume of paid services and custom-designed analyses can be improved. Publishing more details about the types of services offered and giving examples of custom-designed statistics that were provided in the past would also help promote such services to other potential users.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

17. Statistics Latvia should increase transparency regarding all custom-designed analyses and paid services it provides. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.3)

V. Strengthening the orientation towards users

As official statistics are a crucial contributor to democracy, striving for statistical literacy in the general population should be in focus to ensure awareness of the importance of independent, objective statistics concerning central issues in society. This extends beyond ensuring statistical literacy among known professional users. Statistics Latvia should identify activities needed to reach out to a wider range of users.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

18. Statistics Latvia should invest in better understanding and meeting the needs of a wider range of users by creating a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at systematically identifying and reaching new users that represent Latvian society, and expanding user engagement. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 11.1, 11.2 and 3.1)

The Other National Authorities that took part in the peer review do not disseminate their official statistics through the official statistics portal. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control does not have an English website and has not moved its statistics to the official statistics portal. The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre does have an English website but has not moved its statistics to the official statistics portal. Statistics can be found on its website, but not metadata. The Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics does not have an English website and has not moved its official statistics to the official statistics portal. Similar issues are also present in the Other National Authorities that were not interviewed by the peer review team.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

19. All Other National Authorities should improve their service to users by disseminating their statistics and related metadata through the official statistics portal and/or by linking published statistics on their websites under a clearly identifiable heading, thus making the European statistics available to a broader audience. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.1 and 15.5)

In the spirit of continuous improvement integral to the European Statistical System (ESS), the NSI will interpret the recommendations formulated in this report into improvement actions for implementation within the National statistical system (NSS).

2.   INTRODUCTION

It is recognised that quality is one of the European Statistical System's (ESS) comparative advantages in a world experiencing a growing trend of instant information and new challenges, driven by exceptional circumstances or the continuous need for faster but quality-assured data. The European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP) is the cornerstone of the ESS common quality framework, and the ESS statistical authorities have committed themselves to adhere to it.

In this context, it is crucial for the ESS to be equipped with a review mechanism, the peer reviews, supporting with credible evidence this self-commitment to adhere to the ES CoP. The objective of this review mechanism is to enhance the integrity, professional independence and accountability of the ESS statistical authorities. The first round of peer reviews was carried out in 2006-2008, followed by a second round in 2013-2015.

In 2017, the ES CoP was reviewed and extended and now encompasses 16 principles. This revised version of the ES CoP triggered a third round of peer reviews, being carried out in the Member States of the European Union and of the European Free Trade Association, and Eurostat from 2021 to mid-2023. This round of peer reviews aims at improving the quality and trust in European statistics by assessing the compliance of the ESS with the principles of the revised ES CoP. The peer reviews cover the ESS statistical authorities (Eurostat, the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and selected Other National Authorities (ONAs)) developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. The peer reviews will be followed by a period of annual monitoring of the implementation of the improvement actions developed by the NSIs to address the recommendations laid down in the peer review reports.

The third round of peer reviews has the following two objectives:

- To review the compliance/alignment of the ESS with the ES CoP, in order to demonstrate to the ESS and to external stakeholders that the ESS is a system based on the principles of the ES CoP;

- To help NSIs, ONAs and Eurostat in their further improvement and development by indicating future-oriented recommendations; at the same time, they should stimulate government authorities to support the implementation of these recommendations.

Each peer review is conducted by a team of four statistical experts (both from inside and outside the ESS). The peer review has four phases: completion of the Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs) by a country; analysis of these SAQs by the peer review team; a country visit by the peer review team; and the preparation of the final report and ensuing recommendations by the peer review team. These recommendations are of two types:

- Compliance-relevant (ensuring compliance/alignment with the ES CoP);

- Improvement-related (less critical/technical supporting improvements).

A combination of an audit-like and a peer review approach is used when assessing the national statistical systems (NSS) in the countries to benefit from the positive aspects of both approaches. The audit-like approach requires the provision of documents as evidence, the ownership of the recommendations by the peer review expert team, and the right for the NSIs to express diverging views

on the recommendations and to formulate the corresponding improvement actions. Whereas the peer review approach allows for common agreement within the ESS on the methodology, the objectives, scope and implementation arrangements, the focus on improvements and a peer learning process.

Although all principles of the ES CoP will be reviewed for all countries through the SAQ, the peer review experts are free to customize the country visit to concentrate on those principles where more clarification/explanation is needed. However, certain principles such as those concerning professional independence and coordination and cooperation, as well as principles including elements of modernisation, will be assessed during the peer review visit for every member of the ESS.

In addition to the common principles to be addressed for every member of the ESS, the peer review team also placed an emphasis on Principle 4 on Commitment to Quality, Principle 6 on Impartiality and Objectivity, Principle 11 on Relevance and Principle 15 on Accessibility and Clarity.

The Commitment to Quality (ES CoP, Principle 4) was reviewed in detail as it was not entirely evident that statistical output and its quality are adequately documented. The peer review team also highlighted the fact that disseminating statistics objectively and impartially (ES CoP, Principle 6) influences trust in statistics. Therefore, impartiality that ensures explicitly equal access to statistical information by reviewing the rules and arrangements for privileged pre-release access was a subject for discussions during this peer review. Addressing the emerging needs of users and how to identify new users were also discussed (ES CoP, Principle 11). Compliance with ES CoP Principle 15 (Accessibility and Clarity) was a further issue discussed during the visit as the peer review team identified that improvements to metadata should be implemented by Statistics Latvia.

Also, although the reports should not be used to compare one country to another, much effort has been made to ensure the harmonisation of the reports and the ensuing recommendations across the countries so that all countries are treated equitably.

The peer review of Eurostat was conducted by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB).

3.   BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Legislation

The Statistics Law (2015/118.3) establishes the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (internationally known as Statistics Latvia) as the leading authority of the National Statistical System in Latvia. According to Section 2 of the Statistics Law, Statistics Latvia's purpose is to provide statistics on economic, demographic and social phenomena and processes taking place in the society, and also in the environment. The Statistics Law determines the production system of official statistics, organisation of the production of official statistics, censuses, provisions for data dissemination, the rights and responsibilities of the State or local government authorities producing official statistics, of respondents and of other natural or legal persons in the official statistics field. It also determines administrative offences in the field of statistics and competence in administrative offence proceedings.

The main national legal acts regulating statistical activities in Latvia are the Statistics Law, Regulations on the Official Statistics Programme, By-laws of Statistics Latvia, and Regulations on the official statistics portal.

The purpose of the Regulations on the Official Statistics Programme is to provide a list of official statistics for the future planning period that meets the goals and criteria set by the Statistics Law. It contains all statistical products to be produced and disseminated by Statistics Latvia and other producers of official statistics for a period of three years.

The by-laws of Statistics Latvia determine the functions, tasks and rights of Statistics Latvia and the Head of Statistics Latvia, the structure of Statistics Latvia as well as a reporting obligation to the Ministry of Economics.

Regulations on the official statistics portal determine the dissemination of Latvia's official statistics.

Organisation

The Central Statistical Bureau (Statistics Latvia) is a direct administrative authority operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Economics, and is the main producer of official statistics in Latvia.

Statistics Latvia is a functionally centralised authority with a main office in Riga and three data collection centres in the regions.

Management officials and employees work in a single hierarchical system, where one official is subordinate to another. Senior management is formed by the President of Statistics Latvia and two Vice-Presidents: one responsible for statistics production and the second for IT and communication affairs.

Cooperation among statistical authorities is also facilitated through the Statistical Council, a 13-member advisory body, which has the purpose of developing the system of official statistics by

providing recommendations to statistical authorities, as well as facilitating cooperation between statistical authorities, respondents and users of statistics.

Appointment procedures for the head of the National Statistical Institute

The fundamentals of the appointment procedure for the head of Statistics Latvia can be found in two regulations. The State Civil Service Law determines the mandatory requirements to be set for a candidate for a State civil service position and appointment to a civil service position (refers to the head of an institution). Cabinet Regulation No. 293/2019 "Selection procedure for the heads of direct state administration bodies, the Chairman of the Competition Council and members of the Council" determines procedures for planning the selection of heads of state direct administration institutions, setting requirements and evaluating applicants. The recruitment and appointment of the head of a statistical authority is based on the necessary professional competence, including in the field of the production of statistics, as defined in the job description. The evaluation committee of applicants and civil servants shall select one or several applicants who best meet the requirements set out in the job description and recommend them to the responsible Minister. The Civil Service Law also defines that heads of all government institutions are appointed for a fixed term of five years, and that a same person may be the head of the institution for no more than two consecutive terms. Reasons for the dismissal of the heads of Statistical Institutions are laid down in Section 41 of the Civil Service Law, including among others non-conformity with the position, non-conformity with the mandatory requirements for a civil servant, liquidation of the institution, temporary incapacity for work, etc..

When an open competition for the vacant position of the President of Statistics Latvia is going to be announced, a list of requirements will be prepared, emphasising that the President of Statistics Latvia is responsible for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, indicating that the appointment should be based on professional competence only.

Statistical Programmes

Statistics Latvia prepares the Official Statistics Programme that includes all official statistics to be produced by Statistics Latvia and the Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics. Statistics will be included in the Programme, if they meet the following criteria: 1) the production of statistics is substantiated by the Law, a Cabinet Regulation, directly applicable legislation of the European Union or an international agreement binding on Latvia; 2) the production of statistics complies with the standards in the field of statistics (Statistics Law Section 5, Paragraph two).

In accordance with the Statistics Law, Statistics Latvia and other producers of official statistics plan the provision of official statistics for a rolling period of three years and include it in the Official Statistics Programme that is approved yearly by the Cabinet of Ministers as a Cabinet regulation.

The overarching strategic goal of Statistics Latvia is to provide up-to-date statistical information by developing partnerships in the use of new data sources and methods in the production of statistics during the strategy period.

Resources

At the end of 2022, there were 500 positions at Statistics Latvia, of which 457 filled positions – 235 civil servants and 222 employees, 397 female and 60 male.

The budget is designed for a rolling three-year period on the basis of a planning process involving all structural units. In 2023 the total budget amounted to €13.4 million. Statistics Latvia has few external sources of financing originated by requests for specific surveys. It is therefore more vulnerable to the budget cuts which have occurred since 2008 and which obliged it to abandon some surveys and remove breakdowns of statistics.

To address these financial constraints and increase its efficiency, Statistics Latvia has developed several management and performance measurement tools at different stages of the statistical process: the Balanced Strategy Information System analyses the resources necessary for the provision of official statistics, and indicators are set to inform on working hours and expenses by breakdown of products and processes.

However, even though Statistics Latvia considers its resources adequate for the implementation of the Official Statistics Programme, a potential financial shortage might jeopardise its efforts to adopt new technologies, attract high-profile staff and develop communication toward a wider range of users.

Coordination of the National Statistical System

The Statistics Law (Section 4) defines the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (Statistics Latvia) as the leading authority of the National Statistical System in Latvia. Statistics Latvia has a right to implement functional subordination over other statistical authorities in the field of official statistics, by providing methodological guidelines, supervising compliance with the laws and regulations (including the European Statistics Code of Practice), and also by issuing orders.

Statistics Latvia also coordinates the development, production and dissemination of official statistics (including European statistics) at national level. Statistics Latvia prepares the Official Statistics Programme (a list of official statistics of Latvia produced by all statistical authorities), a catalogue of statistical classifications and a catalogue of questionnaires for official statistics, coordinates the development processes of the National Statistical System (for example by creating a common official statistics portal for the National Statistical System) and organises meetings for the statistical authorities on topical issues in the field of official statistics.

The ONAs involved in the peer review

For the peer review, Statistics Latvia selected three of the seven Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics (ONAs). The primary selection criterion was the importance of the ONAs in producing European statistics. This procedure resulted in the selection of the following ONAs: Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics; Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre and Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

The Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics is a derived public entity, which is the leading institute for research on crop breeding and rural economics. The institute is responsible for such

statistical products as Economic Accounts for Agriculture, Agricultural Prices and Indices, and Animal production statistics. It is a scientific institution with two research centres and produces independent research results. It shares the production of agricultural statistics with the Ministry of Agriculture (also an ONA). The Institute employs in total 0.5 FTE to produce official statistics. Its main users are Statistics Latvia and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre is a State Limited Liability Company with public powers. It provides environmental information and specialised environmental services, hydrometeorological and climate information for the Latvian economy, society and national security, as well as products and innovative solutions for sustainable and effective industry development. The centre's equity holder is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The centre is responsible for such statistical products as waste statistics and water statistics and accounts. The centre has two people working on European statistics. Its main users are the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the European Commission and Statistics Latvia.

The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is an institution of direct administration, whose purpose is to implement Latvia's public health policy in the sub-areas of epidemiological safety and disease prevention and the health care policy in the sub-area of health care quality, as well as to ensure the implementation and coordination of the health promotion policy. The centre is responsible for health statistics including e.g. causes of death, the in-patient bed fund and the health-care sector. The centre has 32 people working on statistics of whom 14 work on international statistics. The centre uses several administrative registers as a source for its statistics. A quality assurance system for statistics production is in place. There is no written document in place describing quality assurance, but there is a plan for standard operating procedures. Statistics are disseminated in a database also available in English but this is not easily accessible via its website, as it has been set up by the Centre according to the new standard website of Latvian public institutions. This conversion of the website to the new standard is not yet fully in place and the English version has not yet been fully established. Moreover, the statistics are not yet included in the official statistics portal run by Statistics Latvia. The aim is to start with mortality statistics on the official statistics portal this year. All European statistics are published on Eurostat's website.

Data access

The Statistics Law of Latvia stipulates that official statistics producers can obtain data from the respondents and administrative data sources. According to the terms used in the Statistics Law, administrative data sources are registers, databases, information systems and other sources of information (also private data). The Statistics Law also stipulates that statistical institutions receive data free of charge from administrative data sources of public authorities. Statistics Latvia is authorised by law to participate in the development and decisions to discontinue the use of administrative data sources held by public authorities.

Relations with users/dissemination of statistical products and services

Statistics Latvia evaluates the needs of users during the preparation of the yearly Official Statistics Programme, monitors user requests and regularly organises seminars and meetings with the most important user groups.

According to the Statistics Law, a statistical authority will publish official statistics, which have been produced within the framework of the Official Statistics Programme, in a publicly available form and by a predetermined deadline on the official statistics portal. Time series on the official statistics portal are as long as possible, data selection and tabulation options are available, while statistics can be used in various formats. The official statistics portal also includes reference metadata, a standardised release calendar and provides API access to published data. Statistics Latvia also uses social media for the dissemination of official statistics.

4.   PROGRESS/ADVANCEMENT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Institutional environment, governance and management

The peer review in 2014 expressed some concern about the "supervision" of Statistics Latvia by the Ministry of Economics, but the draft of the new Statistics Law was considered to be sufficiently clear regarding the provisions on professional independence, in accordance with Principle 1 of the ES CoP. The new Statistics Law adopted in 2015 responded to this requirement by clearly stating the professional independence of Statistics Latvia (Section 7).

The peer review in 2014 mentioned several issues regarding the coordination of the National Statistical System, recommending closer relations between Statistics Latvia and the ONAs and a more active process of checking compliance with the ES CoP. Accordingly, in addressing the recommendations, Statistics Latvia has adopted formal processes and good practices. Statistics Latvia prepares an Official Statistics Programme including statistics produced by all statistical authorities and assesses their compliance with the criteria of official statistics. Statistics Latvia organises meetings with the ONAs at least three times a year covering topical issues and the presentations and videos are publicly available on Statistics Latvia's webpage. Moreover, a specific section of the website is dedicated to communication with statistical authorities.

The Statistical Council, which was supposed to be launched in 2015, is now active. Although not all the requirements for safeguarding its independence have been met (e.g. nominating an external expert as chair), the Council meets regularly in a transparent manner. Its composition should be more open to a wider range of stakeholders; however, it has successfully provided an opportunity to liaise with interested partners and statistics users.

The CSB also developed and maintains very active cooperation with universities through an academic breakfast, research papers, and internships, which could also be seen as good practices worth mentioning.

Quality processes

In 2016, Statistics Latvia issued Order 2016/23 on common quality requirements according to which all statistical authorities in Latvia should produce official statistics, within the framework of the ES CoP-based Quality Policy. For the implementation of these requirements, a handbook was provided, an MoU is signed between Statistics Latvia and the head of each ONA, and each institution fills out self-assessment questionnaires. Statistics Latvia reports on the achievement of these goals using an indicator that sets a compliance target of 90%, which has been achieved in a majority of the selected ONAs.

Statistics Latvia was ISO 9001:2015 (quality management system) certified in 2018 and ISO 27001:2013 (information security management system) certified in 2017.

Use of administrative data

Statistics Latvia has significantly improved its cost-effectiveness and timeliness in the delivery of its products. The 2021 population and housing Census was based on administrative sources; improved

processes (data processing) allowed the first census data on population and migration to be published only 6 months after the reference date (compared to 12 months in 2011). Similarly, 63% of data for the 2020 agricultural census was obtained from administrative sources (compared to 18% in 2010).

To reduce the burden on respondents, Statistics Latvia has developed a system of monitoring the response burden by regularly reviewing the sample sizes and asking companies about the time spent answering its surveys.

User engagement

Statistics Latvia's awareness of user expectations was recognised in 2020 with the "Entrepreneurs' Choice" award, identifying it as a leader in client-oriented service and a leader in providing information and consulting.

An advanced official statistics portal, which includes databases, APIs and interactive maps was launched in 2021. The portal is designed as a central dissemination platform for all statistical authorities in Latvia, an initiative that has been evaluated positively by users. Progress has been made in extending the coverage of the portal to all statistics produced under the Official Statistics Programme and corresponding metadata.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE AND FUTURE ORIENTATION

5.1 STRENGTHS OF THE NSI AND THE PARTICIPATING ONAs IN RELATION TO THEIR COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Efficient, professional and trusted statistical authority

Statistics Latvia relies on a strong, recently modernised legislative framework (inter alia, the Statistics Law (2015/118.3)) rooted in the principles of ES CoP. The Statistics Law ensures the professional independence of statistical authorities, provides the mandate to access all national data sources and sets out an administrative framework, which obliges all respondents to provide data requested by statistical authorities. Statistics Latvia also aims to become a national competence centre providing data linkage and analysis services.

The interviews conducted by the peer review team with various stakeholders offered broad confirmation that Statistics Latvia is perceived as a trustworthy organisation and that the statistics it produces are well received in the media and society as a whole.

Statistics Latvia offers excellent value for money, as it is continuously seeking efficiency gains. The use of both human and IT resources is efficient and aimed at delivering quality services to all of its users. Statistics Latvia has a tool for time reporting where staff report their time spent on products, dividing the time spent on production processes according to the first level of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model.

During the peer review visit, it became evident that good team spirit encouraging collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and expertise is present in Statistics Latvia. This is one of Statistics Latvia's important strengths, as the staff is committed to delivering high-quality products and services. This is at least partially due to excellent internal communication, which was confirmed in many sessions during the visit.

Statistical infrastructure

Statistics Latvia has a robust IT infrastructure and sophisticated data processing systems and pays special attention to information security and the preservation of data confidentiality. To ensure security, Statistics Latvia has an information security management system certified according to ISO 27001:2013 and performs regular randomised checks of its IT logs to improve security and prevent misuse. Latvia uses unique administrative identifiers, which enable the systematic use and linking of administrative data. These identifiers are pseudonymised in Statistics Latvia IT systems thus significantly reducing the risk of breaches of data confidentiality.

Another strength is the administrative resource catalogue maintained by Statistics Latvia. It includes all indicators used in-house for any stage of production of statistics, for use in social and business statistics. The catalogue can be browsed by all staff to assess the use of the indicators for statistics. All administrative data sources that contain data on natural persons and are used for statistical purposes

are listed in an annex to the Official Statistics Programme, which includes information on the controller of the administrative data source, the types of (personal) data included, the number of natural persons for which data will be collected, and the statistics for which the administrative data source will be used.

Dissemination

In 2021 Statistics Latvia launched the official statistics portal, a single dissemination portal for all official statistics in Latvia. The portal is modern and well-designed, contains an interactive release calendar, features interactive maps and has embeddable charts that allow the reuse of charts and tables on other websites.

Legal framework

The Statistics Law obliges all statistical authorities to use administrative data sources primarily. To further facilitate this, public authorities must design administrative data sources in such a way that the data meet the needs of official statistical production, and Statistics Latvia is included in the initial set-up, development and decisions to discontinue administrative data source records held by public authorities. Through this function, Statistics Latvia promotes the continued use of administrative data sources for official statistics and coordinates the standardisation of administrative data sources held by public authorities, which are essential for the production of official statistics. In 2021, Statistics Latvia performed the first population and housing census using administrative data sources only and succeeded in publishing the first results on population and migration just six months after the reference date.

Corporate culture

The peer review team was left with the impression that Latvia has a resilient and adaptable National Statistical System. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when Statistics Latvia proved that it is able to adapt to the situation and quickly reorganise its processes accordingly. Statistics Latvia also continually follows new and emerging trends in data collection and analysis and produces tailor-made analyses and experimental statistics.

Overall, Statistics Latvia fosters an open culture and encourages transparency in all its operations. It is approachable to its users and encourages them to ask questions and seek information, which helps in building positive user relations. The peer review team was also left with the impression that Statistics Latvia is willing to address sensitive issues and provide accurate information even when faced with public criticism, thus helping build a trustworthy National Statistical System.

Coordination

Statistics Latvia has efficiently developed coordination within the National Statistical System by setting up a strong framework organising its relations with the ONAs. An MoU is signed between Statistics Latvia and each ONA on implementing the National Statistical System's Quality Policy, according to the provisions of Order 2018/73 of 28 November 2018, and the Guidelines for implementing the ES CoP. Statistics Latvia ensures that quality requirements are met through self-assessment questionnaires completed by the ONAs. The relations between Statistics Latvia and the ONAs are facilitated by regular

meetings (three per year), recorded and records posted on the website, and by a dedicated section of the website and a functional mailbox.

Cooperation with the scientific community

Strong and active partnerships are held with academia, especially with four9 among the 52 public and private higher education institutions (of which 19 universities) present in Latvia, and also through an academic network with other Baltic countries. Statistics Latvia and universities cooperate in various ways: conferences, hackathons, academic breakfasts, cooperation on surveys or research programmes, visits by students and internships in various departments of Statistics Latvia. Easy access to Statistics Latvia's library, information publicised on the internet and access to microdata are highly appreciated and considered valuable inputs for supporting university courses and feeding research programmes. In this context, two research programmes are currently under way and papers have been published based on data made available by Statistics Latvia. This cooperation runs smoothly and effectively and is perceived very positively by all those involved.

Statistics Latvia has developed an online system for submitting requests for access to microdata, which streamlines the approval process and enables easy access. The peer review team was left with the impression that the Latvian scientific community is satisfied with the services provided by Statistics Latvia and that Latvian scientists have a high level of trust in Statistics Latvia.

Response to challenges posed by COVID-19

Statistics Latvia managed to respond quickly to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and to address its implications effectively. During the peer review visit, this finding was confirmed by institutional and non-institutional users, who praised Statistics Latvia for its rapid, flexible response and for explaining changes in methodology and related limitations in a transparent way. The switch to full remote working at the height of the pandemic did not pose any issues for the organisation due to a timely decision to introduce a hybrid working environment and the necessary infrastructure for all staff, which also allows secure remote access to microdata.

New user needs to monitor the impact of the pandemic were considered, such as more frequent statistics on transport, tourism and transport of goods. Statistics Latvia also took part in several voluntary initiatives of Eurostat, e.g. to provide weekly mortality data or information on remote work. Statistics Latvia successfully linked various data to provide new insights, e.g. the proportion of vaccinated persons by economic activity, occupation, industry and age group, prepared morbidity maps at regional level and published other indicators more frequently. The Business Tendency Survey for specific months was supplemented with questions on the factors influencing the activities of enterprises and the Business Tendency Survey in Industry was complemented with additional questions on product orders for specific months. New variables were added to the survey on Passenger Mobility in 2021 in order to estimate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on mobility patterns. In tourism statistics, data on trips that were cancelled due to existing travel restrictions within Latvia and abroad were collected from mid-2020.

To acquire the alternative contact information of respondents from government institutions, the necessary changes to the Electronic Communication Law and Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection were passed swiftly, allowing Statistics Latvia to receive phone numbers and

email addresses from several registers and mobile operators for survey samples; this allowed interviewers to contact 90% of the respondents for social surveys by phone (for Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)) or email, including for the Labour Force Survey, for the EU-Survey on Income and Living Conditions, for the Information and Communication Technology survey, the EU survey on gender-based violence, and others. As a result, response rates could be maintained at a satisfactory level of around 60% for social statistics surveys, also thanks to intensified training for telephone interviewers. The possibility for Statistics Latvia to obtain the telephone numbers of natural persons included in survey samples has been sustained and enables telephone interviews (CATI) to be conducted for all social statistics.

Innovative practices

- Since 2021, Statistics Latvia has organised yearly academic breakfasts with Latvian universities. These meetings have been very fruitful for an exchange with academia on the use of statistical data for research purposes and related needs as well as statistical and scientific developments at national and international levels. Moreover, such meetings have facilitated agreements with universities on cooperation and sharing of expertise (e.g. on population estimation).

- To promote statistical literacy, Statistics Latvia prepares and publishes "School corner" materials in line with the official curriculum for general secondary education. These materials are not available on Statistics Latvia's website but on a designated site for teachers in the form of short descriptions or visualisations of statistics. On request, experts from Statistics Latvia present statistics to students of secondary education or higher education institutions. Statistics Latvia also launched cooperation with secondary schools on the communication of statistics leading to less text and more visualisations.

- The quality management system (QMS) of Statistics Latvia is built around the ES CoP, the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and ISO 9001 and leads to documentation of business processes that also serve as the management system of the organisation. The scope of the system is broad, and the main elements of the system are maintenance, procedures and record-keeping. The system builds upon GSBPM, which is adapted and translated into Latvian. All processes are standardised as much as possible and mapped and risk-based thinking is integrated into the processes. The system is available via the intranet and accessible 24/7. Within the QMS, standardised processes and procedures are implemented for data checking in all phases – input, throughput and output.

- Sharing of information and knowledge is facilitated through an internal system, all staff attending international meetings are asked to submit a report in a web-based meeting report form that is shared with the whole organisation via the intranet. The CSB mission registration and mission reporting system includes information on all planned international meetings and meeting participants. A meeting report has to be submitted for every activity and contains information on the general meeting objective, a description, information on methodological developments, new IT solutions, planned grant projects. The reporting form also provides the possibility to indicate information that applies to other units. When the respective unit is selected from the drop down list, an automatic message is sent to the head of that unit.

- There is a central portal for official statistics in the National Statistical System of Latvia. The aim is for all Latvia's official statistics to be published on this website. From the official statistics portal, visualisation tools and charts can be embedded into other websites.

- Each year Statistics Latvia expresses its gratitude to one enterprise for providing data in an exemplary manner by presenting a "CSB award" for excellent cooperation in the timely provision of high-quality data. Statistics Latvia also works hard to inform respondents both of the importance of responding to surveys and engaging in the theme of the surveys. To improve response rates and promote the surveys, Statistics Latvia has published cartoons in national media explaining the purpose of the surveys.

5.2 ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 Strengthening the institutional environment

The institutional environment for producing official statistics is strong in Latvia and no major concerns were raised with the peer review team with respect to the implementation of the principles related to the institutional environment. Statistics Latvia is perceived as a professionally independent institution that is well respected and trusted among its users.

The Statistical Council was set up in 2016 with the aim of "promoting the development of the production system of official statistics, providing recommendations to statistical authorities regarding the production system of official statistics, facilitating cooperation between statistical authorities, respondents and users of official statistics, and providing opinion on the draft version of the Official Statistics Programme" (Section 9 of the Statistics Law).

Although recommended by the peer review in 2014, the appointment of an external person for the chairmanship was not approved by the Ministry of Economics. The Council has been chaired by the President of Statistics Latvia since 2016, which does not provide an additional public voice to official statistics in Latvia. The peer review team believes that the appointment of an external person of high public standing as chair would enrich the Statistical Council by bringing an additional voice to official statistics and that it would strengthen the links with outside stakeholders and non-government users. The composition of the Statistical Council is very stable, with a majority of members (10 out of 13) present since 2016, and almost half of the members appointed from ministries. The statutory provision for a four-year mandate should be used as an opportunity to review the composition of the membership while considering the appointment of more external statistical experts or users who represent a wider segment of society. The peer review team believes that a balanced membership composition would open new topics of discussion at Statistical Council meetings, thus bringing more insights to form a user-centric perspective to the system of official statistics in Latvia.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R1. The relevant authorities should develop and implement strategies to strengthen the influence of the Statistical Council, starting with a reassessment of its membership to ensure greater diversity of user representatives and consideration of the possibility of an external chairperson. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1)

Statistics Latvia is a professionally independent public authority under the supervision of the Ministry of Economics. The peer review team has found no evidence that this form of supervision presents a risk to the professional independence of Statistics Latvia, especially since the provisions related to professional independence are stated in the Statistics Law of 2015. Although the peer review in 2014 noted that the Cabinet of Ministers approves both the Official Statistics Programme and statistical questionnaires, which is not an example of good practice, the Statistics Law revised in 2015 did not address this issue. Statistics Latvia explained that, in the Latvian legislative system, obligations to third parties can only be issued by the Cabinet of Ministers or Parliament and, therefore, both the Official Statistics Programme and statistical questionnaires are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Even though the approval of the Official Statistics Programme by the government and/or the Parliament is not uncommon in the EU Member States, it seems that approval of the content of questionnaires by the government is unique to Latvia. Although the adoption process for all acts of the government is transparent and Statistics Latvia assured the peer review team that no interventions in the content of statistical questionnaires have been recorded, the peer review team believes that this is a potential risk which needs to be addressed, as it has a huge potential to threaten the professional independence of Statistics Latvia.

Even though the peer review team understands the benefits of obliging respondents to provide answers, Regulation (EC) No. 223/2009 clearly states that the heads of the National Statistical Institutes shall have sole responsibility for deciding on processes, statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases and publications for European statistics developed, produced and disseminated by the National Statistical Institute. The peer review team recommends that Statistics Latvia assesses the possible risks with the existing system, evaluates any negative aspects and tries to determine whether the mere adoption of the Official Statistics Programme would be a sufficient legal basis for this purpose.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R2. Statistics Latvia should reflect on the possible negative aspects of the existing system in which the Cabinet of Ministers approves the content of questionnaires and, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, discuss, identify and implement specific proposals aimed at increasing the professional independence of Statistics Latvia. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 1.4 and 1.3)

In the National Statistical System, seven of the statistical authorities are classified as Other National Authorities (ONAs) as they produce European statistics. Three ONAs were selected for participation in the peer review. The peer review team noted that the capacities of each of the ONAs are quite different and that some of the ONAs are small state (or state-owned) authorities with very limited resources to produce statistics. While they fulfil their role of providing the necessary data to Statistics Latvia and/or Eurostat, the peer review team noted that some of them have difficulties complying with several principles of the ES CoP, e.g. the provision of metadata according to European standards or publishing a release calendar. In some ONAs, only very few staff members deal with the production and dissemination of European statistics and, for most of them, this is only one of their various tasks. Therefore, the peer review team considers that some of the ONAs struggle to dedicate sufficient resources to the maintenance and development of the statistical infrastructure and standards. In cases where an ONA cannot ensure European standards for the production and dissemination of European statistics, or can only do so through outsourcing to Statistics Latvia, the peer review team recommends

that the existing division of work and status of such ONAs should be thoroughly assessed and the findings presented to the government for consideration.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R3. Statistics Latvia, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, should review and adjust the setup of the National Statistical System related to the division of work between Statistics Latvia and the Other National Authorities with limited access to resources for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia has a well-established place within the government administration and cooperates closely with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, which is in charge of the national IT policy. Statistics Latvia works in partnership with respective policymakers to participate in state information systems development from the perspective of standardisation, interoperability and data reuse. Also, according to Cabinet Regulation No. 597/2021 on the Procedures for Supervising Development Projects for State Information Systems, if a public administration body initiates the development of an information system, Statistics Latvia is one of the organisations with which the initial project description must be agreed. Statistics Latvia aims to become a national competence centre providing data linkage and analysis services. In a sense, Statistics Latvia is already performing the role of a national data steward for information requests that can be fulfilled within the capacity of official statistics.

Given the rapidly changing landscape of the national digital infrastructure and the increasing dependence on the availability and quality of administrative data sources, statistical offices are embracing new, more active roles within their national data ecosystems. In the EU, Member States have to assign certain data governance roles to national entities by September 2023, to implement the Data Governance Act. Due to different legal and administrative systems and practices, there is no universal approach to determining the role of the National Statistical Institute within the national data ecosystem. The peer review team encourages Statistics Latvia to reflect on its future role in the national data ecosystem and carefully consider the potential harms and benefits from multiple viewpoints, while also bearing in mind its aims, resources, and potential future income from the extended scope of work.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R4. Statistics Latvia should reflect on its future role in the national data ecosystem and discuss and implement its proposals in cooperation with the relevant authorities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.7, 1bis.1 and 2.4)

The official statistics portal of Latvia is intended to be the place for the dissemination of official statistics in Latvia – both for Statistics Latvia and the Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating official statistics. On the official statistics portal, statistics can be accessed either via the statistical themes or by the search function. For each theme, there are detailed themes where key indicators can be displayed and statistical data in the form of tables, maps or other formats. They can also be linked to press releases or publications. There is reference metadata for the statistics on the official statistics portal, but no direct link to the detailed themes. Furthermore, a possibility of accessing some metadata for the tables exists, but they only cover contact information, the latest

update, unit and source. More comprehensive reference metadata can only be accessed from a separate link on the website to the full list of statistics accompanied by metadata.

The three ONAs that took part in the peer review had not yet moved their official statistics to the official statistics portal, and two of them did not have information in English on their website. Their statistics were not easily accessible and had limited reference metadata attached. There was no publication calendar, and the treatment of errors was not transparent. The peer review team also learned of pre-release access that was not well-justified, controlled and publicised.

As these issues may also apply to the ONAs not taking part in the peer review, it could be beneficial to approach all ONAs to review compliance with the ES CoP in areas such as dissemination, metadata, error correction and pre-release access arrangements.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R5. Statistics Latvia should review the compliance of the Other National Authorities with the ES CoP thoroughly and work with them to ensure compliance with the ES CoP in areas where this is not the case, such as metadata, dissemination, pre-release access arrangements and error correction. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 1bis.1)

Statistics Latvia has a defined pre-release access policy, which is part of its dissemination policy. The dissemination policy states that pre-release access is granted to a limited number of officials to allow them time to analyse, understand and prepare their opinion on the data. Before providing pre-release access, Statistics Latvia assesses the necessity and the benefit to society and concludes an agreement on data confidentiality. According to the dissemination policy, pre-release access is granted to three officials of the Ministry of Economics. Officials who have been granted access to the data before a press release undertake:

- not to disclose the data or the contents of the press release to third parties in any way before their official publication,
- not to express, directly or indirectly, their view on the data or the content of the press release before their official publication,
- not to attempt to delay the date and time of the press release established,
- not to change the press release data or content,
- to use the data solely to prepare for journalists' questions about the socio-economic phenomenon or process covered by the relevant press release.

Even though pre-release access seemed to be organised according to the ES CoP, during the peer review visit, the peer review team identified additional cases of pre-release access that are not publicised in the dissemination policy. Apart from the access granted to officials from the Ministry of Economics, regular pre-release to a news agency, one-time pre-release to an association, and the revelation of the general trends of the statistical releases to ministries that are not listed in the dissemination policy, were identified. Even though the pre-release time window is relatively short (usually 30-60 minutes), the peer review team also noted that the information is sent out via email and, therefore, using a more secure channel should be considered if pre-release access is to be retained.

To comply with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R6. Statistics Latvia should review its arrangements for non-publicised pre-release access to the government and other users, which conflict with the principle of impartiality. If pre-release access is to be retained, Statistics Latvia must ensure that it is limited, well-justified, controlled, and publicised. (Compliance-relevant: ES CoP, Indicator 6.7)

5.2.2 Ensuring adequate resources

Statistics Latvia has built a strong management system for the preparation, implementation and follow-up of its budget, based on a needs assessment consistent with its Quality Management System. It also constantly seeks efficiency gains to optimise the use of its resources. However, these advantages might prove to be insufficient to address new challenges and financial constraints. Maintaining the IT capacity at its best level, adopting innovative methodologies and developing communication toward a wider range of users, as deemed necessary, requires additional funding and new financial sources through more paid services. A key challenge also lies in the capacity of Statistics Latvia to attract and retain high-profile staff with the relevant skills and competencies. Consequently, the peer review team believes that ensuring adequate resources is a central issue in the development of Statistics Latvia in the coming years, an issue that should be considered and solved by the Ministry of Economics to maintain Statistics Latvia at the right level in the field of official statistics.

Although Statistics Latvia considers its resources sufficient for fulfilling its duties, it has not been able to provide adequate compensation to all its employees. The focus was on constantly improving efficiency and adapting its activities to the available resources. The peer review team believes that since most of the statistical production has moved to the use of administrative data sources, additional efficiency gains may prove difficult in the future. Sound arrangements are set for defining needs within the framework of the Quality Management System and building the budget based on a rolling three-year period. The budget has increased regularly, although modestly, since 2017, and the resources for IT doubled in 2022. However, the available resources do not cover the need for additional funding, required to attract high-profile and specialised staff. The peer review team believes that additional resources could be generated through paid services, by promoting their value and reconsidering their pricing model.

The high rate of vacancies indicates that Statistics Latvia is not sufficiently competitive in terms of salaries to attract high-profile employees. The peer review team, therefore, believes that increases in wage levels are necessary to ensure that the majority of staff receive the mid-point of the public sector wage scale, and that high-level experts are paid close to the maximum of the public sector wage scale, with the goal of attracting and retaining highly specialised employees. The peer review team also believes that the vacancies could be filled faster by widening the required competencies and, where appropriate, looking for recruits with diverse academic backgrounds and a wider set of skills for available job openings. Statistics Latvia will also have to comply with an amendment to the Law on the remuneration of officials and employees of State and local government institutions of 2009, stipulating that the minimum wage level must be applied by State institutions by 1 January 2027, for which an increased budget will be needed.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R7. Statistics Latvia should intensify its efforts to obtain more funding from the government, and through paid services, to enable more competitive compensation for all categories of staff and attract and retain employees, and should also consider a broader skill set for vacant positions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia has repeatedly alerted the Ministry of Economics to its needs, asking for increased resources deemed necessary for complying with civil service regulations, offering competitive wages to its staff, producing new statistics and fulfilling its duties in a rapidly changing environment. The provision of reliable data for the use of decision-makers and information of a wide range of stakeholders requires adequate technologies, increased professional capacity, innovative practices and communication tools. Statistics Latvia should be better equipped to respond to these challenges. If Statistics Latvia is expected to continue its rapid modernisation and fulfil its potential as an innovative statistics producer, increased budgetary funding is necessary.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R8. The relevant authorities should increase budgetary funding for Statistics Latvia, taking into account the need to further increase the value that official statistics provide to society, to promote and use new data sources for the production of official statistics, and to reach a wider range of users. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia reports difficulties in attracting highly qualified specialists, primarily due to uncompetitive wages. This weakness may jeopardise its capacity to conduct development projects and engage in new technologies. Staff turnover is identified as a significant risk in the performance of Statistics Latvia's core missions. This results in vacancies and difficulties in hiring new staff. Job vacancies are advertised several times, but the application rate is low, and recruitment may last several months. Consequently, Statistics Latvia has to dedicate time and resources to attracting applicants, training new staff and offering career opportunities within Statistics Latvia. The training strategy might need to be expanded and diversified to adapt to the various needs of the staff at different stages of their career, to consider professional evolutions and innovations, and to address emerging challenges. The peer review team believes that an active recruitment policy, combined with a focus on training employees, defining career paths, and working conditions could make Statistics Latvia an attractive place to work. Such a policy must be supported by adequate communication, including through social media.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R9. Statistics Latvia should develop active human resource management and promote itself as a desirable place to work, e.g. through social media, to become more attractive in the labour market. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 3.1)

Statistics Latvia has a robust IT infrastructure and sophisticated data processing systems that are tailored to improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency across all phases of statistical processes. Regular planning of the authority's technical resources, including the renewal of hardware and software, is a critical aspect of maintaining an efficient and effective IT infrastructure. However, a planned reform in

the state administration, which includes the creation of federated data centres, could complicate the planning process for Statistics Latvia.

Even though, from a ministry's perspective, moving to a data centre may seem like a viable solution, there are potential risks and uncertainties to consider. For example, it may not be cheaper to move to a data centre, and the issue of licensing costs remains unclear. Moreover, the experience of other institutions shows that if problems arise with the data centre, they are not always solved quickly, which could impact the operation of Statistics Latvia significantly. Given the critical nature of official statistics, any disruption or delay in operations could have serious consequences for the organisation and its stakeholders.

Therefore, it is important for Statistics Latvia to evaluate the potential risks and uncertainties associated with moving to a data centre carefully and to consider other options for managing its technical resources. In the meantime, Statistics Latvia should seek advice from other European National Statistical Institutes that have experienced similar reforms previously and should explore interim solutions to ensure the continuity of its operations until the reform's impact on its technical resources becomes clearer. Gathered information should be synthesised into an internal document, which should be discussed internally and potentially presented to the relevant authorities.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R10. Statistics Latvia should prepare a document assessing the long-term harms and benefits associated with a potential migration from its data servers to the federated data centre and analysing the effects on the confidentiality of sensitive data, costs and availability of storage for future use of new data sources, and potentially present it to the relevant authorities. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 5.5 and 3.1)

5.2.3 Improving statistical processes

Statistics Latvia has worked on improving processes by reducing the response burden significantly using more administrative data sources for the production of statistics, optimising sample sizes and defining a uniform approach for using administrative data sources in the Quality Management System (QMS). Generally speaking, the peer review team has no concerns regarding the implementation of principles related to statistical processes. However, the peer review team sees some possible issues related to the promotion of Statistics Latvia's great efforts to reduce the response burden and the absence of a comprehensive metadata system.

Statistics Latvia demonstrated that it has succeeded in reducing the response burden over the past years, e.g. by using more than 40 registers and databases for the 2021 population and housing census, combining data collections with other ministries, or accessing alternative data sources and optimising sample sizes for business statistics. However, the peer review team acknowledges that there are certain limits to reducing the sample size for sectors dominated by a few large companies or many small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, in a small country like Latvia. Respondents are also given the opportunity to indicate in the questionnaires how much time they spent filling in the requested information, which is considered a good practice. Statistics Latvia explained that

information about the estimated response burden is part of the Cabinet regulations authorising new data collections and that the response burden is quantified for this purpose.

However, the peer review team found no evidence that the response burden, in particular, for businesses, is systematically quantified both *ex ante* and *ex post* and that the (aggregated) information is published. A regular quantification and publication of the evolution of the response burden over time, using an internationally recognised method such as the Standard Cost Model or any other model recommended at national level, could help promote the efforts of Statistics Latvia to limit the response burden, both for the government and enterprises. As a result, the acceptance of new statistics and response rates could be improved. Information about the response burden could also be integrated into the reporting, planning and financial analysis system or the Balanced Strategy Information System (LSiS) of Statistics Latvia.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R11. Statistics Latvia should promote how it reduced the response burden over time, and better use the results in negotiations with the government authorities and data providers. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 9.2)

Statistics Latvia has taken various initiatives to exploit administrative and other data sources for statistical purposes to reduce costs and burden and has defined a uniform approach for using such data in its Quality Management System (QMS). While the 2021 population and housing census was solely based on administrative data, 64% of the indicators from the 2020 agricultural census could be derived from register data. Moreover, Statistics Latvia removed some questions from the EU-SILC questionnaire as the information needed could be obtained from the State Social Insurance Agency.

According to section 15(2) of the Statistics Law, both public and private legal entities are obliged to provide Statistics Latvia with data from their administrative data sources, including restricted information, for statistical purposes and upon a reasoned request. Enterprises can use their tax identification number to check which statistical information needs to be provided each year, and then submit their data using the Electronic Data Collection System (EDV) offered by Statistics Latvia.

For a few years, Statistics Latvia has engaged with private data owners to obtain data for official or experimental statistics. Mobility data from a large mobile phone operator was used to assess the day- and night-time population (for labour market statistics) and tourism patterns. Data on purchases at product level from one of the biggest supermarket chains in Latvia was used to evaluate their use for statistics, in particular, for the next Household Budget Survey. While these are positive steps, the peer review team understands that the relationship with private data owners can be sensitive, especially in competitive environments and with a high market concentration.

The peer review team considers it important that Statistics Latvia continue to access new data sources whenever possible, to actively use such data in experimental statistics and in regular production, and to foster cooperation with private data holders. The replacement of traditional surveys with new data sources is of particular importance given the pressure on resources in the National Statistical System. In its relations with private data holders, Statistics Latvia should emphasise the benefits of providing data for statistical purposes (e.g. to reduce costs and burden for enterprises and citizens and to provide more timely statistics), and the statistical confidentiality policy applied.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R12. Statistics Latvia should continue to explore and capitalise on the opportunities to use new data sources to reduce the response burden, improve timeliness, increase efficiency and produce new statistics. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 10.3, 9.4, 9.3 and 9.5)

Statistics Latvia disseminates some reference metadata on the official statistics portal. The metadata cannot be retrieved together with the statistics but only via a separate link on the website. For all statistics, there are some "basic" metadata referring to the Single Integrated Metadata Structure version 2.0 (SIMS 2.0). However, the SIMS 2.0-based metadata on Statistics Latvia's webpage are not complete for any of the statistical products. Statistics Latvia does not have a central system to manage the metadata nor does it have a quality assurance function for metadata able to provide guidance on how to complete the entire structure of SIMS for all statistical products.

Statistics Latvia has a comprehensive quality framework based on international standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 and quality awareness seems to be solid throughout the organisation. However, a comprehensive and coherent metadata system does not yet seem to be part of this quality framework, as the peer review team could identify a lack of coherent metadata. Some users recognised the absence of complete metadata for the statistics/data they use but always found the staff at Statistics Latvia helpful in giving relevant explanations.

Statistics Latvia has already introduced SIMS in the organisation although it is yet to be fully implemented. By expanding the existing metadata system with a comprehensive metadata system, all quality reporting could be enhanced by using SIMS in one common metadata system, with the possibility of selecting the relevant fields needed for different reporting obligations from the SIMS. This could lead to a reduced overall documentation burden for statistical producers and coherent reporting to both international and national users.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R13. Statistics Latvia should develop a comprehensive metadata system that can provide an overview of all reference metadata including classifications, concepts and documentation of statistical products. The system should introduce guidance on how to complete the Single Integrated Metadata Structure for all statistical products. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 8.4, 15.1 and 15.5)

5.2.4 Improving accessibility of statistical releases

Statistics Latvia has significantly improved its dissemination processes through the development of a modern official statistics portal designed to disseminate all official statistics for the entire National Statistical System. The peer review team has no concerns regarding the implementation of principles related to statistical output. However, the peer review team sees room for improvement related to the treatment of errors, the dissemination calendar and a more systematic and proactive approach to public reactions to misuse and criticism.

Even though Statistics Latvia is a well-respected public institution that actively communicates through all available channels, the peer review team was left with the impression that public reactions to

criticism and misuse, in the most important cases, depend on the decision of the Director General. Although the current Director General has extensive experience that allows correct assessments of cases in which public reaction is necessary, the peer review team suggests that Statistics Latvia should establish a more systematic approach to public reactions, based on well-established and documented procedures. The peer review team advocates a proactive approach towards public reactions to criticism and misuse, as this is necessary to maintain credibility and accountability and prevent future misuse of data.

R14. Statistics Latvia should further develop its procedures regarding public reactions to criticism and misuse and implement a more active stance on public reactions. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 1.7)

A procedure for the correction of errors is described in Statistics Latvia's Quality Management System. When errors are discovered in disseminated statistics, there are procedures to correct them as soon as possible. If the error is substantial and could give rise to a change in trends or conclusions, it will be flagged to warn users of the changes made. For statistics with regularly planned revisions, the error will be evaluated and could be corrected in connection with a regular revision if it does not affect the interpretation of the statistics. When the corrections are made, users are notified that there has been an error in the published statistics and that it has been corrected. Details of the corrections are not visible to users, who cannot identify a corrected publication in the dissemination calendar.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R15. Statistics Latvia should improve the procedures related to corrections of errors to make changes more transparent to users. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 6.3)

Statistics Latvia maintains and publishes an interactive advance dissemination calendar for the entire National Statistical System on the common official statistics portal. The calendar is well-designed and provides an easy way for users to view forthcoming publications and access recently released data. When deviations occur, users are informed, and the new release date is set in the release calendar. Even though the previous release dates are available under the rescheduled tab, information about the reasons for the deviation is not available and once the release is published, only the new release date is available to the public. However, users should also be able to track divergences according to the statistical area and producer responsible. The peer review team, therefore, recommends that Statistics Latvia provides information on the changes to publication dates and reasons for any deviation, ideally in the release calendar.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R16. Statistics Latvia should provide information on the changes to publication dates and reasons for any deviation. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 13.4)

Statistics Latvia offers paid services and the preparation of custom-designed analyses for statistics that are not part of the Official Statistics Programme and in most cases are not published on the official statistics portal. If the requested custom-designed statistics can be obtained from existing data, Statistics Latvia offers a paid service to users requesting such data. While the possibility of requesting such services is publicised on Statistics Latvia's website along with contact information and a price list

for different types of services, the peer review team believes that more information should be provided about the nature and volume of the paid services and custom-designed analyses. Improving the information about the types of services offered, e.g. by listing the services and statistics provided in the past, could also help promote such services to potential users by showcasing what Statistics Latvia can offer in addition to the statistics in the Official Statistics Programme.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R17. Statistics Latvia should increase transparency regarding all custom-designed analyses and paid services it provides. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 15.3)

5.2.5 Strengthening the orientation towards users

Statistics Latvia engages strongly in communicating statistics and no concerns were raised by the peer review team with respect to the implementation of principles related to user orientation. Even so, the peer review has identified areas where Statistics Latvia and the ONAs could improve beyond the ES CoP. These mainly cover efforts to reach new user groups.

Statistics Latvia has an active communication unit. Several platforms and tools are used, and Statistics Latvia is actively reaching out to users through social media platforms and has solid relations with the media and other key users such as ministries, universities and business associations.

The various users and stakeholders interviewed during the peer review visit stated that they value the output of Statistics Latvia and the procedures that are put in place to make statistical products available. Researchers are satisfied and the media can easily reach the relevant contact persons when they need further explanations of data.

Several times during the peer review visit the peer review team heard the perception that the public was not interested in statistics. The impression is that both representatives from Statistics Latvia and the users met found this natural and that little could be done to change this. However, the peer review team considers that as official statistics are a crucial contributor to democracy, striving for statistical literacy in the population should be in focus to ensure awareness of the importance of independent, objective statistics about central issues in society. This extends beyond ensuring statistical literacy among known professional users. Hence, Statistics Latvia should identify activities needed to systematically identify and reach out to a wider range of users.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R18. Statistics Latvia should invest in better understanding and meeting the needs of a wider range of users by creating a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at systematically identifying and reaching new users that represent Latvian society, and expanding user engagement. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicator 11.1, 11.2 and 3.1)

Other National Authorities that took part in the peer review do not disseminate their official statistics via the official statistics portal. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control does not have an English website and has not moved its statistics to the official statistics portal. The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre does have an English website but has not moved its statistics to the

official statistics portal. Statistics can be found on its website, but no metadata. The Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics does not have an English website and has not moved its official statistics to the official statistics portal.

As these issues are also present in some of the Other National Authorities not taking part in the peer review, Statistics Latvia should encourage all Other National Authorities developing, producing and disseminating European statistics to formulate a plan for moving their statistics to the official statistics portal of Statistics Latvia and link published statistics on their websites under a clearly identifiable heading.

To improve beyond compliance with the ES CoP, the peer review team recommends:

R19. All Other National Authorities should improve their service to users by disseminating their statistics and related metadata through the official statistics portal and/or by linking published statistics on their websites under a clearly identifiable heading, thus making the European statistics available to a broader audience. (Improvement-related: ES CoP, Indicators 15.1 and 15.5)

5.3 VIEWS OF THE NSI, AS THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE NSS AND THE PEER REVIEW, ON THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS WHERE THEY DIVERGE FROM PEER REVIEW EXPERTS' ASSESSMENT

None

ANNEX A – AGENDA OF THE VISIT

Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 1 – 20 February 2023		
09:00-10:00	**Preparatory meeting with the national coordination desk**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Agnese Lasmane, Head of Quality Management Section Ilze Žoida, Quality Management Section Expert
10:00-10:15	**Welcome and introduction to the programme, adopting the agenda and organisational matters**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Janīna Dišereite, Director of Strategic Planning and Resources Management Department Pāvels Onufrijevs, Director of Informatics Department Uldis Ainārs, Director of Information and Communication Department Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Intars Abražuns, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department Ilze Skujeniece, Director of Business Statistics Department Ramona Skakunova, Director of Statistical Data Processing Department Ieva Zemeskalna, Head of EU Affairs Coordination Division
10:15-11:15	**Presentation of the National Statistical System**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President

Timing	Topic	Participants
		Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department, Ieva Začeste
11:15-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:30	**Progress and plans for the future**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:00	**Professional independence and the Law on Official Statistics and related legislation**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Gundega Kuzmina, Deputy Director of Information and Communication Department
15:00-15:15	Coffee break	
15:15-16:45	**Coordination and cooperation**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Kaspars Misāns Vice-President, Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Ieva Zemeskalna, Head of EU Affairs Coordination Division
16:45-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	**Topic**	**Participants**
Day 2 – 21 February 2023		

09:00-10:40	**Programming, planning and resources**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia**: Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Janīna Dišereite , Director of Strategic Planning and Resources Management Department Pāvels Onufrijevs, Director of Informatics Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department) Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department) Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Intars Abražuns, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department Ilze Skujeniece, Director of Business Statistics Department) Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Ramona Skakunova, Director of Statistical Data Processing Department
10:40-10:55	Coffee break	
10:55-12:25	**Quality**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia**: Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department) Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Intars Abražuns, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department Ilze Skujeniece, Director of Business Statistics Department Gundega Kuzmina, Deputy Director of Information and Communication Department Ieva Aināre, Deputy Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
12:25-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:00	**Methodology, data collection, data processing and administrative data**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All

Timing	Topic	Participants
		Statistics Latvia: Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Pāvels Onufrijevs, Director of Informatics Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Intars Abražuns, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department Ilze Skujeniece, Director of Business Statistics Department Ramona Skakunova, Director of Statistical Data Processing Department
15:00-15:15	Coffee break	
15:15-16:45	**Dissemination and confidentiality**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Uldis Ainārs, Director of Information and Communication Department Gundega Kuzmina, Deputy Director of Information and Communication Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Madars Deaks, Deputy Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Jānis Jonikāns, Information Security Manager Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
16:45-17:45	Peer review expert team discussion	
Timing	**Topic**	**Participants**
Day 3 – 22 February 2023		
09:00-10:15	**Meeting with Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (ONA)**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **The ONA:** Intars Cakars, Director of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste Division

		Lauris Siņics, Senior specialist from the Department of Inland Waters
		Statistics Latvia: Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
10:15-10:30	Coffee break	
10:30-11:45	**Meeting with Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ONA)**	**The peer review expert team:** All
		The ONA: Jana Lepiksone, Director of the Research and Health Statistics Department Jānis Misiņš, Head of Health Statistics Unit
		Statistics Latvia: Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
11:45-12:45	Lunch	
12:45-14:00	**Meeting with Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (ONA)**	**The peer review expert team:** All
		The ONA: Valda Bratka, Head of Agrobusiness Information and Analysis Division Armands Vēveris, Expert, Researcher Dainis Strumpe, Economist, Research Assistant)
		Statistics Latvia: Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
14:00-14:15	Coffee break	
14:15-14:45	**General closing session with all the Other National Authorities (ONA) producing European statistics that are taking part in the peer review visit**	**The peer review expert team:** All
		ONAs: Intars Cakars, Director of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste Division, LEGMC Lauris Siņics, Senior specialist from the Department of Inland Waters, LEGMC Jana Lepiksone, Director of the Research and Health Statistics Department), CDPC Jānis Misiņš, Head of Health Statistics Unit, CDPC Valda Bratka, Head of Agrobusiness Information and Analysis Division), AREI Armands Vēveris, Expert, Researcher, AREI Dainis Strumpe, Economist, Research Assistant, AREI

		Statistics Latvia: Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Agnese Lasmane, Head of Quality Management Section, Ilze Žoida, Quality Management Section expert
14:45-15:45	**Meeting on new data sources**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistics Latvia:** Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Information and Communication Department Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department Intars Abražuns, Director of Business Statistics Department Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
15:45-17:00	**Meeting with junior staff**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Statistics Latvia:** Matīss Žuravļevs, Head of Industrial and Construction Statistics Section, Kārlis Bernāns, Wage Statistics Section expert Dmitrijs Medvedevs, Industrial and Construction Statistics Section expert Egija Biete, Project Manager of Resources Planning, Analysis and Coordination Section Toms Zaltāns, Statistical Planning and Standardisation Section expert Liliāna Roze, Statistical Mathematician of Mathematical Support Section Santa Zaļkalne, Social Statistics Data Compilation and Analysis Section expert Anna Aļošina, Annual National Accounts Section expert Artūrs Luņevs, Dissemination Solutions Section Programmer

Timing	Topic	Participants
17:00-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	

Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 4 – 23 February 2023		
09:00-10:00	**Meeting with main (administrative) data providers**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Administrative data providers:** **Ministry of Education and Science** Aija Rudmane, Head of Services of the Information Technology Department Madara Āžele, Department of Education expert **Rural Support Service** Jānis Vaļģis, Deputy Head of Strategy Planning and Analysis Division Aiga Mālere, Director of Strategy and EU Funds Monitoring Department **Agricultural Data Centre** Lauris Vēriņš, Head of Data Collection and Selection Department **State Land Service** Vents Priedoliņš, Manager of Cadastre Development **National Health Service** Zita Karjuša, Data Management and Analysis Department Systems Analyst Signe Širova, Head of the Data Management and Analysis Department **State Social Insurance Agency** Evita Česka, Head of Statistics Unit **Statistics Latvia:** Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
10:00-10:15	Coffee break	
10:15-11:30	**Meeting with the Statistical Council**	**The Peer Review Expert Team**: All **Statistical Council:** Aija Žīgure, Chair of the Statistical Council, President of Statistics Latvia of Latvia

		Vladislavs Vesperis, Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre Solveiga Siliņa, Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Ministry of Welfare Biruta Sloka, Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Latvian Statisticians Association **Statistics Latvia:** Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
11:30-12:30	**Meeting with main users – Ministries and other public/private institutions (including Central Bank as a user)**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Ministries and other public/private institutions:** **Ministry of Economics** Dace Zīle, Head of Analytical Service **Ministry of Education and Science** Diāna Laipniece, Deputy Director of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in the field of policy implementation and monitoring **Ministry of Finance** Dainis Stikuts, Deputy Director of the Department of Economic Analysis, Head of the Macroeconomic Unit **Ministry of Welfare** Evija Kūla, Deputy Director of Social Policy Planning and Development Department Sanita Vasiļjeva, Director of Social Policy Planning and Development Department **Latvijas Banka (Bank of Latvia)** Daiga Gaigala-Ližbovska, Head of the Statistical Preparation Department of the Statistical Office **''Grupa93'', Ltd** Jurijs Kondratenko, Project Manager, Economist **JSC "RB Rail AS"** Ģirts Bramans, Head of Strategic Stakeholders **Statistics Latvia:**

		Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-14:30	**Meeting with main users – business associations and federations and trade unions, as well as representatives of a committee of users**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Main users:** **Latvian Employers' Confederation** Jānis Hermanis, Financial and tax expert **Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments** Jānis Upenieks, Systems Analyst Māris Pūķis Senior Advisor **Association of Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking Industries of Latvia** Toms Grīnfelds, Chairman of the Board **Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association** Andris Melnūdris Managing, Director **Statistics Latvia:** Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
14:30-14:45	Coffee break	
14:45-15:45	**Meeting with main users – Media**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Media**: **Latvian information agency "LETA"** Inguna Ukenābele, Chief Editor of LETA reviews **Dienas Bizness** Jānis Goldbergs, Journalist Juris Paiders, Freelance author **Latvijas Avīze** Olafs Zvejnieks, Editor of newspaper weekly supplement "Latvijas Bizness" **Public broadcasting of Latvia** (eng.lsm.lv) Mike Collier, Journalist **Statistics Latvia:** Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department

Timing	Topic	Participants
		Gundega Kuzmina, Deputy Director of Information and Communication Department Sanda Rieksta, Public Relations Manager of Communication Section
15:45-16:45	**Meeting with main users – Scientific community**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Scientists:** **University of Latvia** Māris Bērziņš, Associate Professor Zaiga Krišjāne, Professor, Dean **RISEBA University of Applied Sciences** Ilmārs Kreituss, Associate Professor **Rīga Stradiņš University Statistics Unit** Andrejs Ivanovs, Head of the Statistical Laboratory **Biceps (Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies)** Anna Zasova, Researcher Nicolas Gavoille, Research Associate **Statistics Latvia:** Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department
16:45-18:00	Peer review expert team discussion	

Timing	Topic	Participants
Day 5 – 24th February 2023		
09.00-11.00	**Clarifications, remaining or additional issues and focus areas**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All
11:00-11:15	Coffee break	
11:15-13:00	**Meeting with the senior management of Statistics Latvia: conclusions and recommendations**	**The Peer Review Expert Team:** All **Statistics Latvia:** Aija Žīgure, President Norberts Tālers, Vice-President Kaspars Misāns, Vice-President Jolanta Minkevica, Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department Ieva Začeste, Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department Janīna Dišereite, Director of Strategic Planning and Resources Management Department

		Uldis Ainārs, Director of Informatics Department, Communication Department
		Baiba Zukula, Director of Social Statistics Department
		Armands Plāte, Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department
		Intars Abražuns, Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department
		Ilze Skujeniece, Director of Business Statistics Department
		Ramona Skakunova, Director of Statistical Data Processing Department
		Ieva Zemeskalna, Head of EU Affairs Coordination Division
13:00- 14:00	Lunch	

ANNEX B – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Statistics Latvia:

Aija Žīgure (President)
Norberts Tālers (Vice-President)
Kaspars Misāns (Vice-President)
Jolanta Minkevica (Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department)
Agnese Lasmane (Head of Quality Management Section)
Ilze Žoida (Expert of Quality Management Section)
Ieva Začeste (Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department)
Janīna Dišereite (Director of Strategic Planning and Resources Management Department)
Pāvels Onufrijevs (Director of Informatics Department)
Uldis Ainārs (Director of Information and Communication Department)
Baiba Zukula (Director of Social Statistics Department)
Armands Plāte (Director of Agricultural and Environment Statistics Department)
Intars Abražuns (Director of Macroeconomic Statistics Department)
Ilze Skujeniece (Director of Business Statistics Department)
Ramona Skakunova (Director of Statistical Data Processing Department)
Ieva Zemeskalna (Head of EU Affairs Coordination Division)
Gundega Kuzmina (Deputy Director of Information and Communication Department)
Ieva Aināre (Deputy Director of Statistical Methodology and Quality Department)
Madars Deaks (Deputy Director of Legal and Corporate Services Department)
Jānis Jonikāns (Information Security Manager)
Junior staff:
Matīss Žuravļevs (Head of Industrial and Construction Statistics Section)
Kārlis Bernāns (Wage Statistics Section expert)
Dmitrijs Medvedevs (Industrial and Construction Statistics Section expert)
Egija Biete (Resources Planning, Analysis and Coordination Section Project Manager)
Toms Zaltāns (Statistical Planning and Standardisation Section expert)
Liliāna Roze (Statistical Mathematician from Mathematical Support Section)
Santa Zaļkalne (Social Statistics Data Compilation and Analysis Section expert)
Anna Aļošina (Annual National Accounts Section expert)
Artūrs Luņevs (Dissemination Solutions Section Programmer)

Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre:

Intars Cakars (Director of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste Division), LEGMC
Lauris Siņics (Senior specialist from the Department of Inland Waters), LEGMC

Centre for Disease Prevention and Control:

Jana Lepiksone (Director of the Research and Health Statistics Department), CDPC
Jānis Misiņš (Head of Health Statistics Unit), CDPC

Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics:

Valda Bratka (Head of Agrobusiness Information and Analysis Division), AREI
Armands Vēveris (Expert, Researcher)
Dainis Strumpe (Economist, Research Assistant), AREI

Ministry of Education and Science:

Aija Rudmane (Head of Services of the Information Technology Department)
Madara Āžele (Department of Education expert)
Diāna Laipniece (Deputy Director of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in the field of policy implementation and monitoring)

Rural Support Service:

Jānis Vaļģis (Deputy Head of Strategy Planning and Analysis Division)
Aiga Mālere (Director of Strategy and EU Funds Monitoring Department)

Agricultural Data Centre:

Lauris Vēriņš (Head of Data Collection and Selection Department)

State Land Service:

Vents Priedoliņš (Manager of Cadastre Development)

National Health Service:

Zita Karjuša (Data Management and Analysis Department Systems Analyst)
Signe Širova (Head of the Data Management and Analysis Department)

State Social Insurance Agency:

Evita Česka (Head of Statistics Unit)

Statistical Council:

Aija Žīgure (Chair of the Statistical Council, President of Statistics Latvia)
Vladislavs Vesperis (Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre)
Solveiga Siliņa (Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Ministry of Welfare)
Biruta Sloka (Member of the Statistical Council, representative of the Latvian Statisticians Association)

Ministry of Economics:

Dace Zīle (Head of Analytical Service)

Ministry of Finance:

Dainis Stikuts (Deputy Director of the Department of Economic Analysis, Head of the Macroeconomic Unit)

Ministry of Welfare:

Evija Kūla (Deputy Director of Social Policy Planning and Development Department)
Sanita Vasiļjeva (Director of Social Policy Planning and Development Department)

Latvijas Banka (Bank of Latvia):

Daiga Gaigala-Ližbovska (Head of the Statistical Preparation Department of the Statistical Office)

''Grupa93'', Ltd:

Jurijs Kondratenko (Project Manager, Economist)

JSC "RB Rail AS":

Ģirts Bramans (Head of Strategic Stakeholders)

Latvian Employers' Confederation:

Jānis Hermanis (Financial and tax expert)

Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments:

Jānis Upenieks (Systems Analyst)
Māris Pūķis (Senior Advisor)

Association of Mechanical Engineering and Metalworking Industries of Latvia:

Toms Grīnfelds (Chairman of the Board)

Media:

Inguna Ukenābele (Latvian information agency LETA)
Jānis Goldbergs (Diena Bizness)
Juris Paiders (Dienas Bizness)
Olafs Zvejnieks (Latvijas Avīze)
Mike Collier (LSM, Public broadcasting of Latvia)

University of Latvia:

Māris Bērziņš (Associate Professor)
Zaiga Krišjāne (Professor, Dean)

RISEBA University of Applied Sciences:

Ilmārs Kreituss (Associate Professor)

Rīga Stradiņš University Statistics Unit:

Andrejs Ivanovs (Head of the Statistical Laboratory)

Biceps (Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies):

Anna Zasova (Researcher)
Nicolas Gavoille (Research Associate)